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JOKER**

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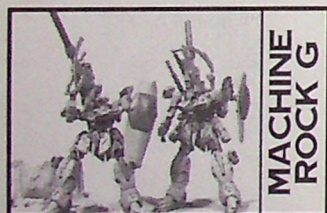
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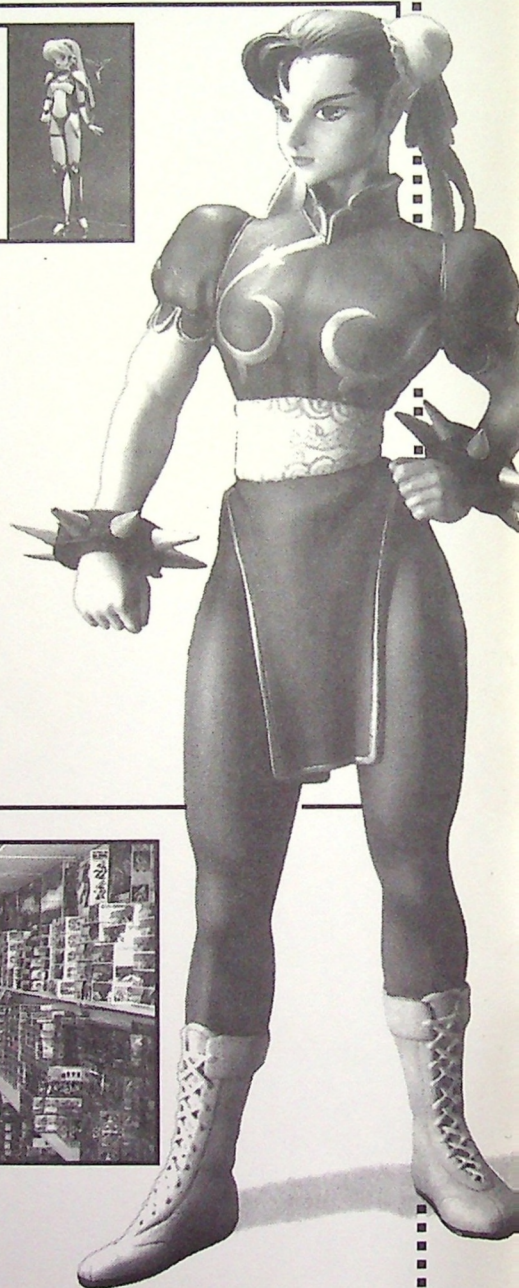
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Mike was one of the two founding members of ANIMAG. He is now a computer game designer at Lucasfilm Games and aspires to weigh 250lbs by the year 2000.

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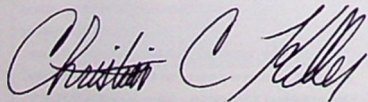
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The popularity of anime in the U.S. has grown in recent years and in the last two we've seen the rise of several companies producing English language versions of classic anime. The problem has been that the quality of these English language versions hasn't improved alongside the growth in size and sophistication of the U.S. market. Some have defended this situation as resulting from the many technical difficulties involved in creating authentic English versions of anime. Most often complaints have been focused on dubbed anime. To be fair, those companies who produce dubbed product have a larger number of problems to overcome since the cost and technical problems are a quantum level more difficult than subtitled anime.

Still it was disheartening last summer to hear one producer assert that there was nothing wrong with his product and no need to improve it. I was instantly stunned by the statement because while all of these companies are making money, anime has yet to earn the kind of revenues that domestic film and videos (animated or live action) generate. The core audience for anime products is still the fan.

The problem may lie in, of all places, the fan. On the one hand, fans are the harshest of critics but on the other they are also the most voracious consumers. If you buy a product and are dissatisfied with its quality you obviously have the right to complain. If, however, you still go out and buy that same company's product the next time and again complain then it behooves you to stop buying that company's product. What motivation if any is there for the business to increase the quality of its goods when it is confident that the consumer will buy them regardless of the quality.

This example may focus on the English anime product, but it is also true of magazines, conventions, retailers and anyone else in the U.S. anime market. The simple truth is that only the consumer can create the motivation for higher quality product and that consumer today is the anime fan. Not buying U.S. marketed products may seem like a harsh approach since anime has only recently become readily available. However, if the suppliers of the material are not constantly motivated to increase the quality of their work we will never see kind of quality in U.S. marketed anime that we the fans desire. 



Chris "Mr. Warmth" Keller
editor

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THE PROBLEM MAY LIE IN, OF ALL PLACES, THE FAN.

COMING SOON

THE FUTURE OF ANIME

ANIME RELEASES

DATE	TITLE
6/1	Cyberformula Round 6
6/11	Ushio to Tora 7
6/18	FIGHT
6/21	Gunm
6/21	WolfGuy 6: Requiem
6/23	NG Knight Lamune & 48DX: part 1
6/25	Bastard!!: part 6
6/25	Elcia
6/25	POPS
6/25	Moldiver 3
7/1	Ushio to Tora 8
7/7	Honlan
7/21	Ys: Shrine of the Sky: part 4
7/23	Elcia Finale
7/25	Kishin Hedan 4
7/25	Moldiver 4
8/1	Big Wars
8/21	Gunm: Tear Sign
8/21	Giant Robo 3
8/21	Gakcyber
8/25	Kishin Hedan 5
8/25	Moldiver 5
9/25	Moldiver 6
9/25	Kishin Hedan 6

TRANSLATIONS

8/11	Legend of the Overfriend
8/11	Area 88 Act I
8/15	AD Police File #1: Phantom Woman
8/25	Orange Road LD#2 (OVAs 5-8)
8/25	Guyver Volume 4
8/25	Devilman Volume 1
8/25	Battle Angel
9/1	Area 88 Act II
9/1	The Venus Wars

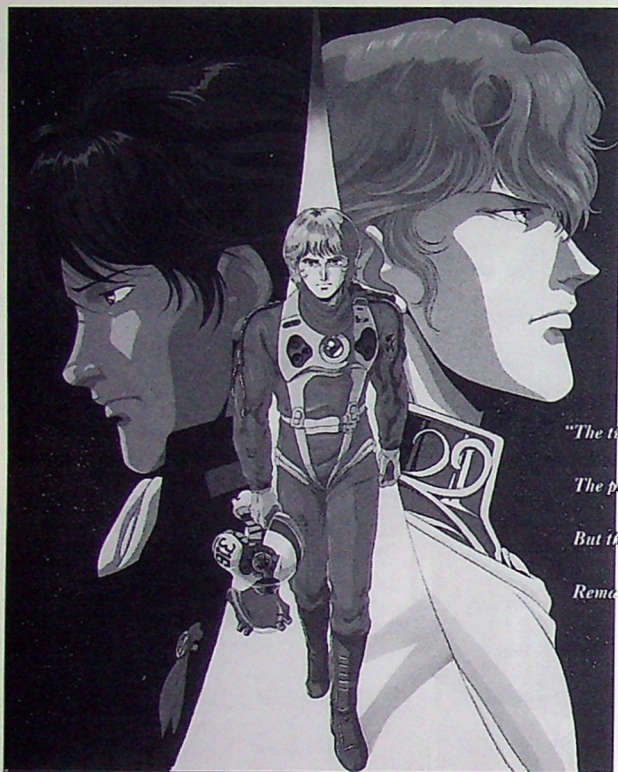
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30	VHS•VPV-63120 LD•VPLV-70223	¥4800	Vap	Finale
27	VHS•SA4462 LD•n/a	¥4800	Toei	8 episodes planned
30	VHS•PCVP11167 LD•JSLA22201	¥4800	Pony Canyon	
30	VHS•JSVA22201 LD•JSLA22201	¥5300	Nihon Soft System	2 parts planned
27	VHS•BES-789 LD•BEAL-512	¥4800	Bandai	Finale
30	VHS•KIVA-163 LD•KILA-69	¥5800	King Record	3 parts planned
30	VHS•VIVF-10094 LD•PILA-1151	¥4500	Pioneer LDC	Finale
45	VHS•JHE-399 LD•JVL690011	¥4800	Victor	4 parts planned
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30	VHS•PIVA-1016 LD•PILA-1174	¥4800	Pioneer LDC	7 parts planned
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50	VHS•USM 1047	¥34.95	U.S. Manga Corps	Part 1 of 3 (subtitled)
40	VHS•AT-093-005	¥34.95	AnimEgo	Part 1 of 3 BGC Spinoff series (subtitled)
120	LD•AD-093-002	¥64.95	AnimEgo	Compilation of four KOR subtitled OVAs (subtitled)
60	VHS•USR-VD21	¥24.95	U.S. Renditions	Originally released at Guyver II episodes 1 & 2 (dubbed)
55	VHS•DIE-03	¥34.95	Dark Images Entertainment	Go Nagai's classic series from the '70s (subtitled)
65	VHS•BA/001	¥34.95	A.D. Visions	Based on Battle Angel Alita by VIZ Comics (subtitled)
57	VHS•USM 1048	¥34.95	U.S. Manga Corps.	Part 2 of 3 (subtitled)
104	VHS•USM 1071	¥29.95	U.S. Manga Corps.	Feature Film (dubbed)

KILLER SERIALS

SERIES RECAP

GALACTIC HEROES LEGEND

BY SUE SHAMBAUGH



*"The times may change,
The place may change,
But the deeds of men
Remain the same."*

Galactic Heroes Legends (or GinEiDen as it's known in the Japanese fan press) is the lengthiest complete work to date by the novelist Tanaka Yoshiki, also known for such other works as *So Ryu Den* (Wounded Dragon Legend), *Apferland Story*, and the more recent space opera *Titania*, the first two of which have also been recently animated. Spawned from a short story entitled *The Chess of the Galaxy*, it quickly grew into a fourteen book series, of which ten novels form the main story, and four "prequels" tell the tales of Yang's and Rheinhard's early military careers (some of which are currently being released as supplementary OAVs). This second set of episodes covers, roughly, novels three through five of the main series. Approximately 110 episodes are planned in this series, for a total of four OAV sets.

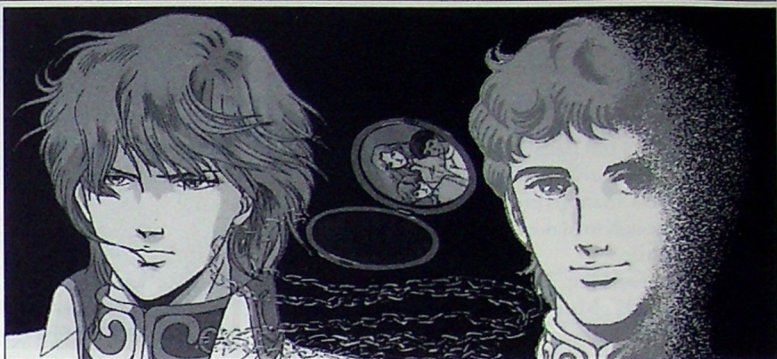
This article continues the story begun in *V.MAX*² of the superb *Heldensagen vom Kosmosinsel* series. We will ultimately cover Set 2, Volumes 8–14, Episodes 27–54 and beyond. • To recap: The human universe was originally a single political entity, the democratic UNITED STARS GALAXY. During the Imperial Era, the USG became a ruthless aristocracy in the model of 18th century Prussia. This was the birth of the GALACTIC EMPIRE based on the planet Odin. After two centuries, a breakaway faction trying to recreate the old USG formed THE FREE PLANETS on Heinessen. War ensued for 150 years. A third faction based on Earth, the PHEZZAN—though officially neutral—hope to manipulate their rivals into destroying each other.

These books (and, thus, the animated series) are different from most SF in that they are written almost from an historian's point of view. This is evident in the extensive and accurate documentation of dates, ship names, space zones, soldiers, politicians and parties, and even the "file footage" that shows up every so often (Yang has a love of history in common with his author, so it's easy to see why he's Tanaka's favorite character, even if he doesn't eventually turn out to be the main protagonist!). Of a vast cast of characters, nearly all are named; and if Tanaka bothers to name a character, you can bet that, sooner or later, even if it's fifty chapters down the road, that person will be important both to the plot and to the history of his grand universe.

I guess that's the word that best sums up this series—Grand! The anti-hero Rheinhard is incapable of doing anything on less than a grand scale. To call Rheinhard a villain wouldn't be quite fair, since this series fairly teems with weak and downright evil people; it's simply his nature to be brilliant, and in an era of war, that means being a brilliant conqueror. The only other character in modern literature I can think of as comparable to Rheinhard would be Lestat, of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. Rheinhard is to war what Rachmaninoff was to Romantic music.

Yet, as much as Rheinhard has gained and stands yet to gain, his losses are already staggering. Although Rheinhard is always a few steps ahead of Yang Wen-Li, in this series we finally have an opportunity to see firsthand that Rheinhard's brilliance is simply no match for Yang's intellect. However, what I like to call "Yang's Curse" is once again borne out by the whole of this series: Yang is always right; and nobody ever listens to him.

As this series develops, we'll also see how Julian Minci, Yang's protégé and adopted son, is being positioned to take Yang's place. His broad military training, his wish to be the best soldier possible "in order to be of use to Admiral Yang," and his intelligence (who else could beat Yang at chess?) all point in that direction.



Rheinhard still grieves for his fallen friend Kircheis



Julian Minci, Yang's protégé and adopted son



Hildegard von Mariendorf, Rheinhard's private secretary

One interesting visual effect to watch is the end of the opening credits. As the episodes progress, Rheinhard's flagship approaches closer and closer to Heinessen before the curtain drops.

EPISODE 27: FIRST BATTLE

(The first couple of minutes condense the first 26 episodes into a synopsis of sorts, showing how Yang Wen-li and Rheinhard von Lohengramm—previously von Muesel—each rise to greater military influence within the *Free Planets Alliance* and the *Galactic Empire*, respectively. However, even as Rheinhard grows ever nearer to the pinnacle of political power that he craves, Yang finds himself regarded more and more as an enemy by his own government, and the feeling is mutual.

At the point we join the story, Rheinhard has promoted himself to Imperial Premier, Supreme Commander of the Galactic Imperial Army, and a court rank of Prince. Hildegard von Mariendorf has been appointed his private secretary. Yang is still an Admiral, but fully in charge of *Iserlohn* and its fleet, the only great military force left in the Alliance (for greater details and more in-depth character description, please see the earlier V.Max guide to GinEiDen in issue 2).

Dusty Attenborough's half-fleet, in which Julian Minci is a pilot in training under the watchful eyes of Olivier Poplan (the "Ace of Hearts") and Ivan Konev, unexpectedly encounters an Imperial fleet while on training maneuvers in the Iserlohn

Corridor. Attenborough's only strategy is to hold off the Imperial fleet (led by an admiral under **Admiral Kemp's** command) until Yang can come to their rescue from Iserlohn. As Attenborough is aboard Yang's old flagship **Ulysses**, the enemy is deceived into thinking Yang is out on maneuvers and fights cautiously enough to make Dusty's plan work for a while.

Back at Iserlohn, backed up by "guest admiral" **Merkatz's** advice, Yang decides to launch a full-scale rescue. Julian takes part in his first battle, blowing up three Valkyries and a cruiser (he also seems to be the kiss of death to any mother ship he lands on). Just as the enemy has figured out that he's fighting mostly amateurs, Yang shows up to save the day, and is rather embarrassed by Julian's success, saying only "But I keep telling you not to do dangerous things!"

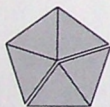
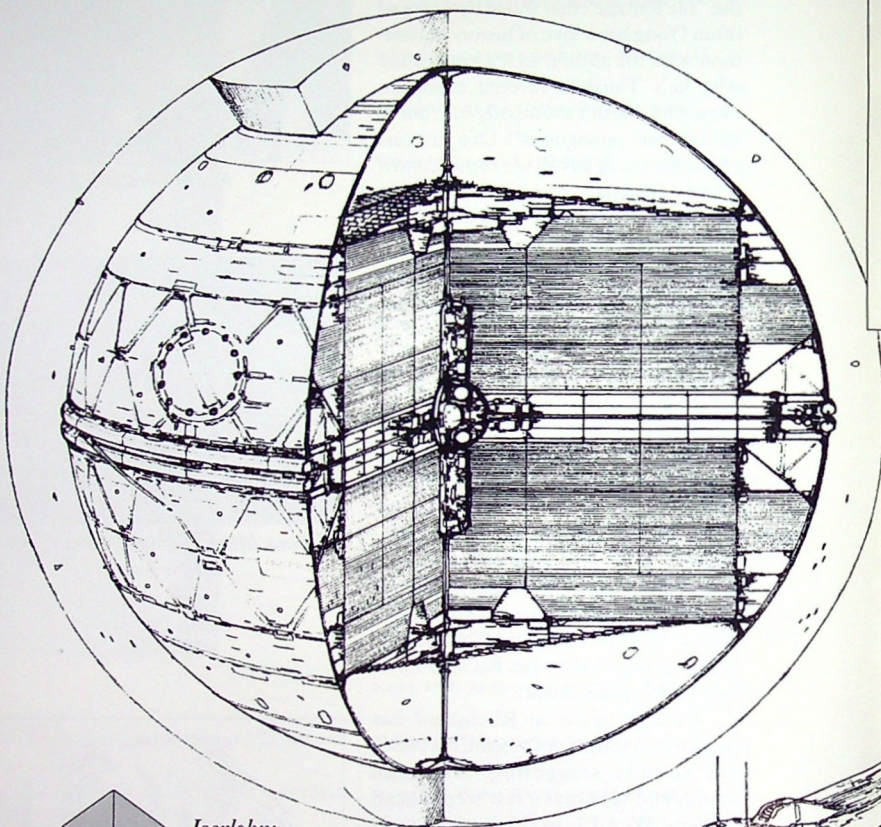
Meanwhile, back in the Empire, Rheinhard is on a talent search, while also busy with all the duties attendant on him as the actual power behind the child emperor's throne. Aided by two noblemen, **Brach** and **Lichter**, who have voluntarily given up their titles, he sets about becoming "Rheinhard the Emancipator" due to his numerous land and legal reforms. However, he has been unable to cope with the grief of **Kircheis's** loss, and—this is made more evident in the novels—has begun to drink *much* more heavily. He also tends to fidget neurotically with the locket he always wears, which contains his mementos of Kircheis. Approached by **Commodore Streit**, a former employee of the defeated **Prince Braunschweig**, he makes him his advisor, second in position only to **Oberstein**.

Phezzan, meanwhile, is hatching a plot of its own, which centers around a certain military engineer...

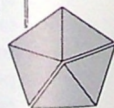
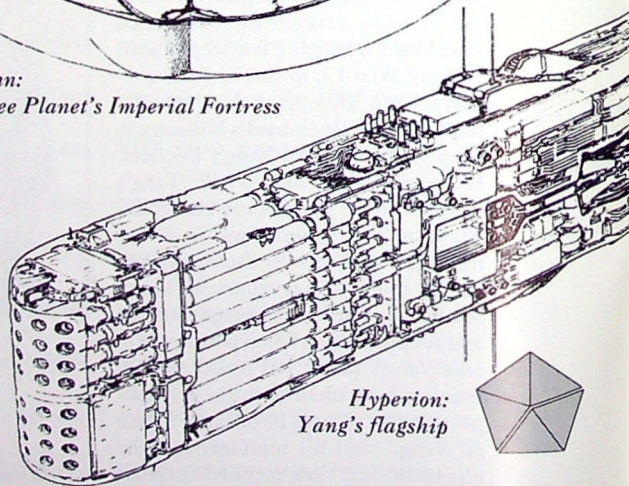
EPISODE 28: PORTRAITS

Rheinhard is beginning to discover the hard truth that "good help is hard to find;" mediocre volunteers have taken to showing up with bribes in hand. It is at this point that we're introduced to many new characters—**Kissling** (palace staff),

POPULAR



*Iserlohn:
the Free Planet's Imperial Fortress*



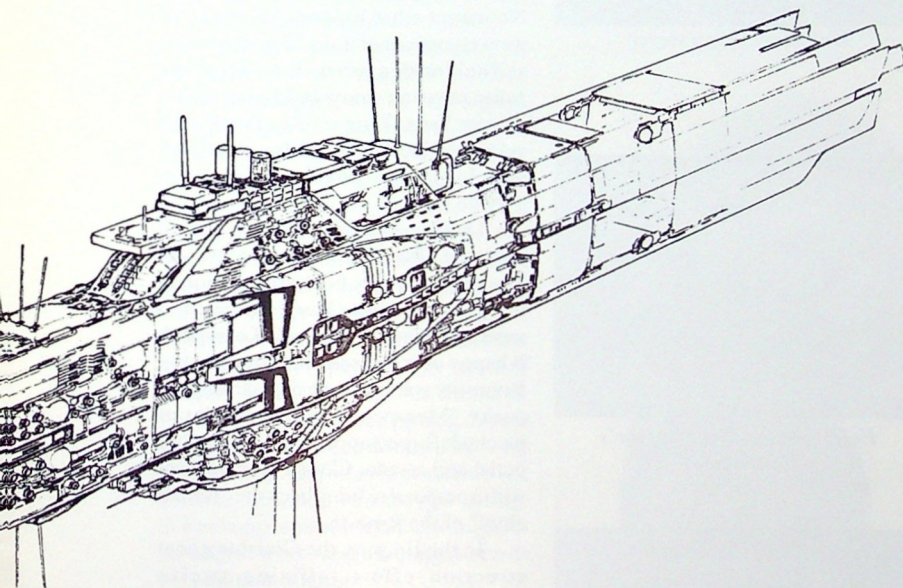
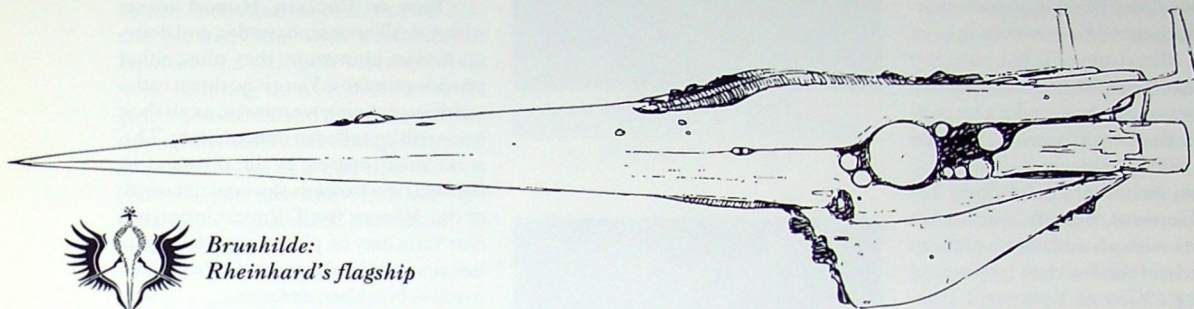
*Hyperion:
Yang's flagship*

MECHA-NIX

Rücke (a minor adjutant of Rheinhard's), Eisenach and Lennenkamp (two new admirals under Rheinhard). Kemp comes back to apologize for his failure at Iserlohn, and Rheinhard is uncharacteristically forgiving.



*Brunhilde:
Rheinhard's flagship*



The first "portrait" in this episode is that of Mittermeyer. Mittermeyer, despite Reuntal's reservations, married happily. Ignoring his father's cautions to choose a "safe" living, Mittermeyer chose early to pursue a career in the army.

When his mother's distant cousin Evangeline became orphaned because of the war, she was taken into their home to be raised. Whenever "Wolf-sama" would come home on leave, she would greet him, unfailingly cheerful. When she was of age, and he was tired of stalling, he determined to marry her, and, dosing her with flowers and candy, ("Finally!!!" his father said) proposed. And, although childless so far, they have had an ideal marriage for six years. Reuntal, a friend he'd made in a bar-room brawl, refused to attend the ceremony, only showing up long enough to congratulate the bride and turn all the bridesmaids' heads.

Reuntal was the only son of a self-made man who married the third daughter of Count Marlbach out of ambition. Reuntal's father had made his fortune by trade and married late, but his young wife was used to finer things. When she bore him a son with one black eye, she thought not of the vagaries of genetics, but of the handsome, black-eyed lover she'd had. She was barely

prevented from trying to erase the evidence of her unfaithfulness by putting that child's eye out. She killed herself shortly thereafter, and his father always blamed him for her death.

Since then, Reuntal has always treated women coldly, thinking them all untrustworthy like his own mother, and he cautioned Mittermeyer against marrying. Mittermeyer is the only one ever to have heard this tale, and since Reuntal was dead drunk when he confided it, it has never been mentioned between them since.

Then, Science/Technology Inspector General Schaft approaches Rheinhard with an audacious plan: to eliminate Iserlohn Fortress by warping Giersburg ("City of Vultures") Fortress at it. Rheinhard is intrigued. He appoints Kemp and Mueller to command the operation. Meanwhile, Rubinsky plots how to ensure Yang's absence from Iserlohn during this time.

Rheinhard's people discuss in the officers' bar their feelings on the operation, Rheinhard's choice of commanders for it, and his appointment of Streit as advisor (they're opposed to all three!). Also related is an amusing incident in which Oberstein seems to have adopted an old dalmatian that followed him home from the Admiralty one day; it's said that he personally boils chicken for it for all its meals. During a discussion with said Oberstein, Rheinhard announces that he has no intentions to kill the child Emperor—at least not yet, while he may still be of value.

EPISODE 29: ONE THIN LINE

Phezzan's real objective, of course, is not merely to act as a go-between for the Empire and the Alliance, but to bring about their mutual downfall so that Earth might once again rule the galaxy. Rubinsky is visited by a representative of Earth's religious government, Bishop Degsby, who is worried about his plans and especially about Rheinhard's sharp advisor, Oberstein. Rubinsky explains his ostensible plan: to help form a "Neue Reich" centered on a Lohengramm Dynasty, with all its power concentrated



Oskar von Reuntal



Wolfgang Mittermeyer



Evangeline—Mittermeyer's future bride



Rupert Kesserlink

in one man, and then to topple that one man: Rheinhard.

On Iserlohn, Julian finds that he's been promoted, but doubts Yang will be pleased to hear it. He remembers when he first moved in with Yang, and virtually took over the slob's house.

Back on Phezzan, Rupert meets with the Alliance ambassador, and delivers him an ultimatum: they must either provide proof that Yang is no threat to the stability of their government, or all their loans will be called in immediately. This is no small matter, as the outstanding balance now exceeds the total net worth of the Alliance itself. Rupert insinuates that Yang may be plotting another coup, because he's destroyed Heinessen's Artemis Necklace defense.

To celebrate Julian's promotion, he and Yang dine at the Cazellnu's place. Alex Cazellnu also takes advantage of the situation to deliver a warning to Yang about Trunicht and his personal safety. No matter what happens, Trunicht always comes out of it smelling like a rose, as if he'd made a pact with the devil. And Julian must not always be kept around to protect Yang. Yang refuses to take the subject seriously, so Cazellnu broaches it with Julian, who promises to do whatever he can.

On Heinessen, the new Secretary of Defense, Negroponti, advocates to Trunicht that they hold a secret inquiry into Yang's activities, based on Phezzan's recommendation. Rupert Kesserlink is happy over this seeming triumph, but Rubinsky warns him against getting too cocky. Meanwhile, another plot is hatched: Rupert approaches former Imperial ambassador Count Remscheidt with a proposal to bring back the "former glory" of the Empire.

In the Empire, the Giersburg construction effort (affixing twelve navigation and twelve warp engines in a ring around the outside of the sphere) goes well, yet Kemp is skeptical and requests more resources, which Rheinhard approves. Hilda finds herself wishing that Kircheis were still alive, as he would be the only person capable of talking Rheinhard out of this wasteful course of action.

EPISODE 30: THAT WHICH IS LOST

Admiral Mecklinger pays a visit to Hilda's invalid cousin, **Baron Heinrich von Künmel**, as a favor to her because the young man admires people who pursue more than one calling in life. Mecklinger, as a soldier, pianist and noted painter, fits the bill, and presents him with a watercolor. Heinrich is a strangely intense young man, suffering from an inability to digest amino acids, and living vicariously through his heroes. Mecklinger remarks later that he finds it odd that the boy allows no pets near him. Hilda says it is because he is jealous of their ability to move about freely.

The Giersburg normal navigation test is a success! But, back on Odin, Rheinhard surmises that Hilda has opposed the operation all along. She also worries that, as his enemy until now has been the Goldenbaum Dynasty, he might kill the child Emperor. He assures her he has no such intention.

Yang has been ordered back to Heinessen for an "inquiry," a thing which Frederica, for all her superb powers of memory, has never heard of. On Phezzan, Rupert reports this fact to Rubinsky, who then tells him to get Remscheidt some helpers. At Iserlohn, Cazellnu cautions Yang not to go, but orders are orders. Cazellnu and Schenkopp are to be left in charge of Iserlohn in his absence. So as not to appear threatening, Yang will take not his flagship *Hyperion* but a small cruiser, *Leda II*, only his adjutant, Frederica, and one bodyguard, **Louis Mashengo**, recommended by Schenkopp. As Julian is not formally a soldier yet, he cannot go along. Schenkopp remembers discussing with Julian just what Yang's feelings towards his adjutant might be.

As soon as Kemp personally reports the success of the first test to Rheinhard, he bids farewell to his family, promising a trip to the children's grandmother upon his return.

At this time, Rupert "recruits" former captain Leopold Schumacher and Count Alfred von Lanzberg. Schumacher, who defected and sold



Ernesto Mecklinger

his battleship to buy a Phezzanni collective farm with his men, is threatened with a boycott of his produce if he does not participate. Lanzberg, a hopeless romantic who is having a hard time selling his memoirs to a publisher, joins the mysterious cause, failing to recognize Schumacher as the man responsible for his friend **Baron Flegel's** death.

Reuntal and Mittermeyer still oppose the Giersburg warp plans, and recollect the day they first laid eyes on Rheinhard, four years ago. But the warp test goes ahead, with Schaft unwillingly aboard Giersburg Fortress, and it, too, succeeds. Rheinhard goes to Giersburg personally, and isolates himself in the room where Kircheis was killed, remembering things said and things left unsaid. Hilda is worried for Rheinhard's mental state if he goes on like this. 完

To be continued.

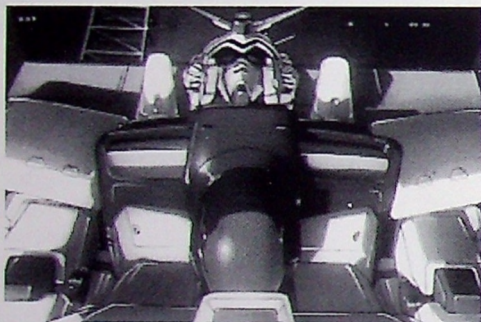


Yang & Frederica

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THE YEAR IS 2184.

THE PLACE IS NEW TOKYO.

ARTICLE

BY

ELIZABETH BALES

TRANSLATIONS

BY

KENSAKU NAKATA

THE LAST RESORT IN A DECK OF CARDS IS...

JOKER

THE EMPEROR'S GARDEN

As PART ONE opens, Lin Rikudo and his landlady, Mrs. Ohya, are watching a television program about gosei ningen. When the show ends, she asks him if he has ever met any of these special police officers. He tells her that everything about them—names, cases, and so on—is top secret. ♣ Lin manages to leave Mrs. Ohya's apartment without having to pay his overdue rent. Back in his own room, he gets a phone call saying that a body has been found on a riverbank. ♣

STORY BY YUU MAKI • ART BY KATSUMI MICHIHARA



CHARACTERS

JOKER: *A genetically engineered shapeshifter (gosei ningen or "combined human") who can take on any humanoid form. Created especially to be part of a Special Police Task Force, he/she has the authority to kill when necessary. Joker has silver eyes and enhanced physical strength and reflexes.*

LIN RIKUDO: *A homicide detective. He is good-hearted but clumsy at times.*

DUKE KAIJOJI: *The head of Conselun, a powerful organization Dies mysteriously.*

YUMITO KAIJOJI: *Duke's eldest son and the heir to the leadership of the Conselun.*

GOTO KAIJOJI: *Duke's second son, and captain of the spaceship Flying Mermaid.*

AYATO KAIJOJI: *Duke's third son. An honors electrical engineering student and Natsumi's twin brother.*

NATSUMI KAIJOJI: *Also known as "Melody Angel", a synthesizer musician. Duke's third-eldest daughter.*

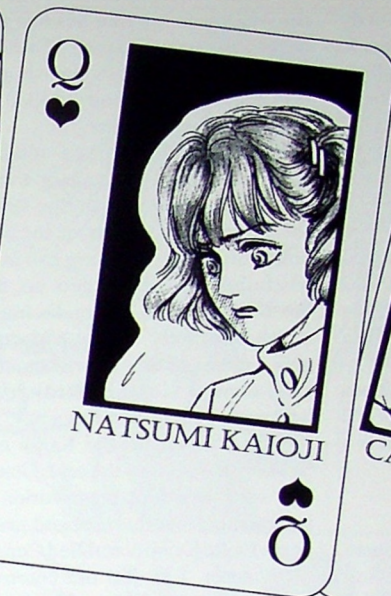
CAPTAIN STRAKER: *Lin's uncle and a friend of Yumito Kaijōji.*

At the river, he hears that the victim was killed by an overdose of **Mars Moon**, a drug that comes from *Phobos*, one of the moons of *Mars*. Back at the station, Lin and his partner **Barry** are assigned to stake out **D.P. Hudson**, a suspected drug supplier who has just returned from *Phobos*.

Meanwhile, at Hudson's apartment, a woman tells him she'll be waiting. "Judy...will you be waiting for me? Or for the Mars Moon?" he mocks.

Outside, Lin and Barry see Hudson leave, and Barry sets off to follow him. From the rooftop, Lin watches Judy and is surprised when she seems to see him. "From this distance?" he wonders. "Impossible..." Judy leaves soon afterward and Lin follows her, only to find that she's playing games with him as she tosses him a drink from a vending machine but keeps going.

Following Judy into an alley, Lin is chagrined to find her waiting for him and reading his citizenship card. His questions are cut short by a scream. Nearby, three toughs are mugging a woman. As Lin and Judy rush toward the scene, the woman is thrown over the bridge railing. Lin dives after her while Judy takes care of the muggers.



As Judy helps Lin pull the woman from the water, he is shocked both by her strength, and by finding the three thugs unconscious. Judy runs off as Lin calls for an ambulance and does CPR on the woman. Lin is annoyed to think she's gotten away, and the ambulance driver's comments on the state of the thugs does not improve his mood.

Lin walks away, only to meet Judy again. He asks why she is with Hudson, and she reveals her secret: she is a gosei ningen. "There aren't many of us on Earth, but we are vital on the other planets (colonies)."

Lin tells her he can't let her go back to Hudson, but she brushes his words aside and tells him there's a drug shipment that evening at the spaceport harbor. "I'll arrange it so you can arrest everyone except Hudson, so please give me some time," she says. "Until then...I wouldn't want the police to interfere with my work." She waves a key at him, tosses it aside, and moves away from Lin. He tries to follow her, only to find she has handcuffed him to the bridge railing. She looks back at him and smiles.

"Lin, my name is Joker—the last resort in a deck of cards."

JOKER: PART II

Lin reports back to his captain, who asks if he thinks Joker's information might be part of a set-up. Lin replies that he is going to trust her.

Meanwhile, Barry is still following Hudson, who signals a follower to distract Barry, which he does with enthusiasm.

Elsewhere, Lin watches from hiding as Joker goes alone into a warehouse. He follows her in—and is promptly caught. Joker, trying to get into the computer, is also discovered. She is dismayed to see Lin a prisoner and challenges Hudson, saying he won't get away with keeping a police officer hostage.

"Who are you, Judy?" he asks in reply, and threatens Lin with his gun. She stops him by revealing herself as a gosei ningen. "I'm in the big leagues now," he says "wanted by the special police."

Hudson has Joker and Lin tossed in a locked room in hopes of getting information out of Joker. She tells Lin she has no back-up. They talk about her life as a gosei ningen. She tells him that her work is literally her life. "If I couldn't be a special officer, they'd terminate me because they'd have no use for me."

She asks Lin to kiss her, and he is startled to realize she has freed herself

from her bonds. "I think it's about time we got out of here," she says, and smashes the electronic lock. Lin looks on in amazement as she dispatches the guard. "Contact police headquarters for back-up," she tells him "I'm going after Hudson." Lin fires as a guard comes around the corner. Outside, Barry and another officer hear the gunfire and head for the warehouse.

In the computer room, Hudson is downloading information onto a disk. As he takes it from the computer, Joker speaks from behind him. "So that's the Phobos syndicate's data. I've been waiting for you to get that. The security on the computer was too tight, and I couldn't gain access."

Hudson spins around and fires. As Joker dodges, he runs for the exit. Joker follows him down the stairs, and a gunfight ensues that ends with Hudson trying to dodge a shot from Lin, only to fall from high stairs to his death. Joker thanks Lin for his help.

"I've got all the data I need to become Hudson and infiltrate the syndicate," she says. "Now all we need is

to make this body an unidentifiable dead body." She shoots Hudson's body in the face and then, to Lin's shock, changes her shape to become Hudson.

"I told you I have to be Hudson," Joker says, then kisses Lin and thanking him again for his help before running out. Lin kneels on the floor in shock as Barry runs in.

Headlines the next day trumpet, "Mars Moon syndicate taken down!" Lin watches the gosei ningen drama with his landlady and remembers Joker's words: "Thank you Lin. I'm glad I met you."

"They're not really like the ones on TV," he thinks "but probably I'll never see her again...because she's a special police officer."

THE EMPEROR'S GARDEN

Thirteen of the silver-eyed gosei ningen special police are assigned to the four largest planets: Spades to Earth, Diamonds to Mars, Clubs to Jupiter, and Hearts to Venus. And...

The story opens at the Kaioji family mansion. Duke Kaioji dozes in a rocking chair on the lawn while inside, the rest of the Kaioji family plans for an upcoming celebration of the anniversary of Conselun. Yumito discusses arrangements with Magician Toma, a mysterious presence wearing a grotesque mask, who has been hired to do a show for the party.

Outside, Duke stands suddenly, looking around him in confusion. He reaches for his wine glass, which shatters. His face contorts in fear, and he screams and begins to run in panic.

Yumito, hearing his father, dashes to the window to see him heading toward the electric security fence. "Father, you can't go that way!" he shouts—but Duke runs into the fence and is killed as his family watches in horror.

Back at Mrs. Ohya's apartment, she and Lin are once again watching the gosei ningen drama. She says that she wants to meet one of the special police officers, prompting Lin to think wistfully of Joker. He gets up, telling her he's going to a friend's house to watch a *Melody Angel* concert, and gets a message on his wrist communicator to meet Captain Straker at the heliport; there is an emergency.

On the way to the Kaioji estate, Straker briefs Lin on the case. Conselun is a very powerful organization with interplanetary influence, and until his death Duke Kaioji controlled Conselun.

Straker, Lin and the coroner set down near the *Flying Mermaid*, the spaceship captained by Duke's second son, Gohto. Yumito Kaioji comes to meet them. Straker asks why he asked them to come, and Yumito tells them that Duke is dead—and that he believes it's murder.

At the mansion, Yumito explains the estate's security measures. The estate consists of 10 acres of forested land, most of it secured by an electric anti-terrorist barrier. Yumito says he doesn't believe Duke's death was a suicide. He then introduces the ten witnesses" himself, Duke's eldest daughter Hitomi, Gohto, the second daughter, Akimi, and her fiancé Dickson Jay, Ayato, Magician Toma,

Natsumi, Yumito's daughter Mimi and his wife Christy.

Straker begins the questioning with Mimi, but his looming height and grim expression frighten the little girl. Lin takes over, and Mimi tells her story and then goes back to her room. During Hitomi's statement, a family argument ensues, with Akimi insisting that someone murdered Duke.

Into this commotion steps a slim man with long, black hair. "Who are you?" Yumito demands, and the man removes his dark glasses to reveal metallic silver eyes. "Under the authority of Rule Number 13, this case is now under the jurisdiction of the special police task force."

Yumito protests, saying that the family does not want a non-human involved in their affairs. Hitomi questions the special police officer, and he tells her "This case must be treated as an accidental death." Straker refuses to accept the transfer. He wants to work with the special police on the case. The man smiles. "Straker, are you professional enough to bend the truth? Can you really say to the public that a murder was an accidental death?"

Meanwhile, Akimi glances out the window and sees Mimi carrying a blanket toward her grandfather's body, which has not yet been removed from the place of death. "The power's still on!" Yumito cries. In the confusion, the special police officer shoots a hole through the window and vaults out—from the third floor. As Christy watches anxiously, Magician Toma distracts Mimi with a magic trick thrown past her and the officer leaps to



catch the little girl. Outside, Gohto tells him "I still don't trust you because you're a doll (artificial)." and the Kaioji family members walk away.

"You haven't changed Lin. I'm so glad," the officer says. Lin is puzzled, and the other man pretends hurt. "Don't you remember me?" he teases. "You kissed me, don't you remember?"

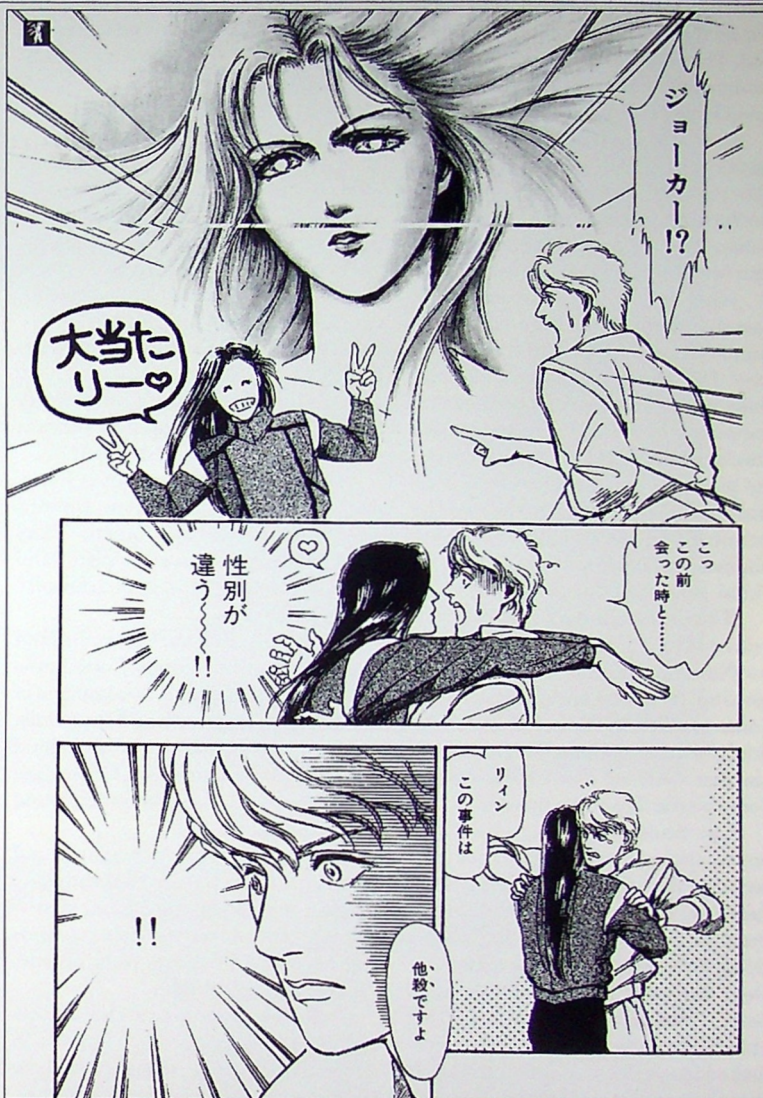
❧ "Joker!" Lin exclaims. "But you're different, your sex is different!" Joker throws his arms around Lin, and as Lin sputters he whispers into his ear, "Lin, this case is a murder." Joker explains that Duke couldn't have been shot through the barrier and that the murderer has to be someone from inside.

Lin is still stuck on the gender issue, however. "What are you doing in a man's body?" he demands. Joker patiently explains that he can take in DNA from other people and apply it to his own body.

Joker smiles, "If I'd known you were on this case, I'd have come in female form. But the special police task force is top secret, so I can't change my form until this case is over." By this point, Lin has hit overload and is staring blankly into space, so Joker mischievously kisses him. A moment later, Yumito approaches and thanks Joker for saving Mimi. "That's my job, to protect humans," Joker says.

As the three return to the living room, they overhear another family argument. Straker tells Lin that he and the coroner are leaving but orders Lin to stay behind.

Hitomi takes Lin and Joker on a tour of the mansion, including a special sound room. Hitomi tells the two that Duke's



rocking chair has a speaker set into it and that he was listening to music when he died. The audio room has a special DNA handprint lock, and only members of the Kaijō family can enter.

For the rest of the day, Joker investigates further on his own, while Lin talks to family members. After an uncomfortable dinner with the Kaijō family, Lin and Joker meet to discuss their leads—among other things.

Joker tells Lin that Duke's wine glass shattered due to a high-frequency sound from the speaker in the rocking chair. He relates that 40 years before, Duke had survived a major earthquake. Someone with access to the audio room simulated the sound of an earthquake and piped it through the chair speaker, causing Duke to panic and run into the security fence. He also adds that he has eliminated all but four suspects: Hitomi, Akimi, Ayato and Magician Toma.

The next morning, Lin goes to talk with one of the stagehands, who says he saw Natsumi talking to Toma four days ago to ask for a magic trick. The man said Toma couldn't do it because he said he didn't have his equipment. He also tells Lin that someone was standing in for Toma on the day of the murder.

Lin finds Ayato and says "The person asking for the magic trick four days ago was you, wasn't it? Natsumi wasn't in the building at the time." Ayato at first derides Lin for asking, saying he's too old for magic tricks. But when Lin asks him about the audio room, Ayato panics and blurts out that a black box—the source of the earthquake sound effect—was found hooked up to the equipment in the audio room. He saw Magician Toma in the vicinity of the audio room prior to the murder and thought he looked suspicious. Then, when Ayato asked for Toma to do the magic trick, Toma couldn't do it.

"So who was it?" Lin asks. Ayato remembers a moment from his childhood:

"I want to go to space too, on an explorer ship," he tells Gohto.

"When you're big and strong..." his brother promises, ruffling his hair.

Ayato pleads with Lin, "You have to help my brother!"

On the Flying Mermaid, Gohto tells his crew members there's going to be a change in plans. "This all would have gone smoothly if the special police hadn't gotten involved," he grumbles. "I'll take care of Yumito later."

One of the crew members says someone is outside, and Gohto goes out to find Joker. "Has your investigation gone any further, Doll?" he asks. "Investigation?" Joker replies "You don't think I'm really here to investigate the death of Duke Kaijō?"

"What are you saying?" Gohto demands.

"I didn't come here to investigate his death. I was supposed to prevent it...but I came too late, didn't I?"

Gohto swears and strikes at Joker, who ducks and slices open Gohto's forearm with his bare fingers. They fight, and Joker draws his pistol and holds it on Gohto. "How did you know?" Gohto asks.

Joker tells Gohto he knows the Red Caravan is out to destroy Conselun—and that Gohto is second-in-command of the terrorist organization. Meanwhile, one of Gohto's crew sneaks up behind Joker and jumps him, giving Gohto time to escape to the estate's underground monorail system.

Joker fights with the crewman and breaks his neck, only to find the other holding a rifle on him. The man is about to fire when a gunshot sounds and he falls. Lin shouts from behind, "Joker! Are you alright?"

Joker jumps onto Lin's hovercycle and tells him to hurry. "Yumito's in danger!" Meanwhile, in Yumito's study, Gohto holds a gun on his elder brother.

"Gohto, why are you doing this?"

"I didn't say anything to the doll, but there needs to be change in history. We don't need the influence of Kaijō out in space; it should stay on Earth. It's over. Now the Red Caravan will become the world's most powerful organization. Kaijō is my enemy!"

"Violence will solve nothing." Yumito tries to convince his brother. "It's too late!" Gohto shouts—when suddenly Joker and Lin appear and put an end to his plans.

Later, Joker tells Lin that though they know Gohto's long sojourns in space were part of the reason he joined the Red Caravan, they'll never know exactly what changed him. "When you return to police headquarters, you will report Duke Kaijō's death as accidental. The story should be that terrorists attacked the estate and Gohto Kaijō saved the conglomerate—and there will be no scandal."

"And Gohto died in the attack?"

"Who's dead?" Joker asks with a smile. "I'm going to become Gohto Kaijō and infiltrate the Red Caravan." And before Lin's eyes, he changes.

The Conselun anniversary celebration goes on as planned, with Joker playing the part of Captain Gohto. After the festivities end, Joker finds Lin to say good-bye, in typical Joker fashion.

And Joker heads back into space on the Flying Mermaid to continue the work of destroying the Red Caravan.

In the next volume, Moon Fantasy I, the New Tokyo Police Department is faced with a series of murders—and Lin suspects Joker is involved. 完



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V.MAX: When did you begin your career in entertainment industry?

TAKACHIHO: I was still in college in 1973 when Studio Nue was founded and that was my introduction to the animation business. Then in 1977 I wrote "Crusher Joe" and that was successful so I resigned from the post as president of Studio Nue and became a contract writer for Studio Nue as a science fiction writer.

V.MAX: Could you tell me more about Studio Nue and its mission as a company.

TAKACHIHO: The first work we did was called "Zero Tester." Back then in Japan, mecha design was just something that an animator who just happened to like mecha would do as an afterthought for the show and so there was no consistent design philosophy behind the design of the mecha.

Instead what we [Studio Nue] did was come up with scientific extrapolations, and realistic designs for Zero Tester. So we were able to convince Sunrise that this was a real position in the production process and that we could be subcontracted to do it. So that method (of working) was successful and as a result the position of mecha designer was established. After that came design jobs for (Space Cruiser) Yamato, Raideen, Combattler V and

When looking at the history of the Japanese animation industry, the contributions of Studio Nue stand out among the list the of great creative talents that created the anime boom of the 1980s. In the early 1980s Studio Nue provided the conceptual design work for a new SF/Mecha series for the Tatsunoko company called **Super Dimensional Fortress Macross**. Its success and that of subsequent Tatsunoko series such as **Super Dimensional Century Orguss**, **Super Dimensional Calvary Southern Cross** and **Genesis Climber Mospeada** were instrumental to the anime boom of the mid '80s. Among the talented names of Studio Nue past and present are the ever popular character designer **Haruhiko Mikimoto**, mecha designer and Macross creator **Shoji Kawamori** and Studio Nue's founder, and creator of the Dirty Pair and

Crusher Joe, Haruka Takachiho. Mr.

Takachiho attended the recent *Anime America* convention in Santa Clara this past June and was able to speak to me briefly on the final day of the convention. Mr. Takachiho and I met in a suite atop of the Westin Hotel in Santa Clara.

Despite the recent jet lag, a convention full of panels and our brief time allotted for the interview, Mr. Takachiho was a thoughtful and generous interview subject.

Zambot 3. In the meantime we were training young people, one of whom was Shoji Kawamori who came to our studio and not only demonstrated his abilities as a mecha designer but also as someone who was capable of directing pieces as well. Then one day Kawamori came up with a paper model of a plane that could completely transform into a robot. We immediately took that idea to the toy companies and animation companies and that's how Macross started. Since then Studio Nue has



高千穂 遙

become a planning company as well as a design company. And that's the story.

V.MAX: The transition from being the head of Studio Nue to being a science fiction writer seems to have hinged on the popularity of Crusher Joe. Can you tell us about the genesis of the story and where the idea came from.

TAKACHIHO: It is the case that most Japanese science fiction writers started out wanting to be manga artists. So did I. When I was a high school student I

formed manga fan groups and I was trying my own hand at drawing manga. But I couldn't get my art to improve, so I decided against becoming a manga artist and emphasized more of the planning and story side like Studio Nue. In the late '70s word that an American film called Star Wars was getting popular reached us and I thought that a story like that might be popular in Japan too. So I brought out my old manga notes and created Crusher Joe.

V. MAX: How many of the Crusher Joe books are there presently?

TAKACHIHO: [Trying to remember] I'm not too sure...but I think there are 8 books in the Crusher Joe series presently. There are seven books in which Joe is the main character and one where his father (Crusher Dan) is the main character.

V. MAX: Several years ago a Japanese publisher published an English language version of *The Great Adventures of the Dirty Pair* to help Japanese students learn English. Are there any other English versions of the Crusher Joe or Dirty Pair novels.

TAKACHIHO: There is only the single Dirty Pair book at present.

V. MAX: What was the origin of the Dirty Pair series and how did it evolve from the Crusher Joe series.

TAKACHIHO: The Dirty Pair is completely different story and has a totally different origin. Crusher Joe is an orthodox classical style space opera. But the Dirty Pair reflects a destructive tendency and is a different story altogether.

V. MAX: But isn't there a continuity between the two series?

TAKACHIHO: The Dirty Pair appear in the one book of the Crusher Joe series that features Crusher Joe's father Crusher Dan. The third book in the Dirty Pair series tells that same story from Kei's first person perspective, while the Crusher book was written in the third person and focuses on the Crusher team. It is the same story told from two different perspectives. It was considered revolutionary at the time

and caught a lot of attention in Japan.

V. MAX: With the successes of the Dirty Pair comics from Studio Proteus are there any plans to publish English language editions of the Dirty Pair novels or Crusher books similar to Mr. Yoshiyuki Tomino's Gundam books?

TAKACHIHO: [chuckling] If you want to do it, that's fine with me. Or if you know of any publishers who do. The Great Adventures of The Dirty Pair was published by a Japanese company to teach English to Japanese students. So if there is anyone who wants to translate these books for an American audience I would welcome it.

V. MAX: What writing projects are you currently working on?

TAKACHIHO: There is another WWA story where the main character is Dragon Lee. Dragon Lee had a brief appearance in one of the animated Dirty Pair episodes. There are currently three Dragon Lee books right now. I would like to write more Dragon Lee stories and would like to see them animated.



right:
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language with
art by
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Yoshikazu—
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get you
unhooked on
phonics!*

V. MAX: Concerning the animated works of Crusher Joe and the Dirty Pair, what were your roles in these productions?

TAKACHIHO: As far as Crusher Joe I wrote the script and was the musical advisor. I handled dialogue for the Dirty Pair projects. Right now, as for the Dirty Pair there is a new six episode OVA series in the works and the first episode will probably be out before the first of this year. It will be a completely new look for the characters.

V. MAX: Thank you for talking to us, I know how tired you must be and I hope you'll have a pleasant remainder of your visit to the U.S. and a good trip back to Japan.

V. Max would like to thank Mr. Takachiho and the helpful folks at Anime America (Chris Swett, Mashi Scanlon, Greg Scanlon, Peter Wong and James Fraser) for helping us with this interview and the incomparable Taka Karahashi for his superb translation skills which allowed us to complete this interview in the time allotted. 完

left: Yuri & Kei from the 1985 TV series

the Great Adventures of Dirty Pair

ディペアの大冒険 TAKACHIHO



translated by David Lewis

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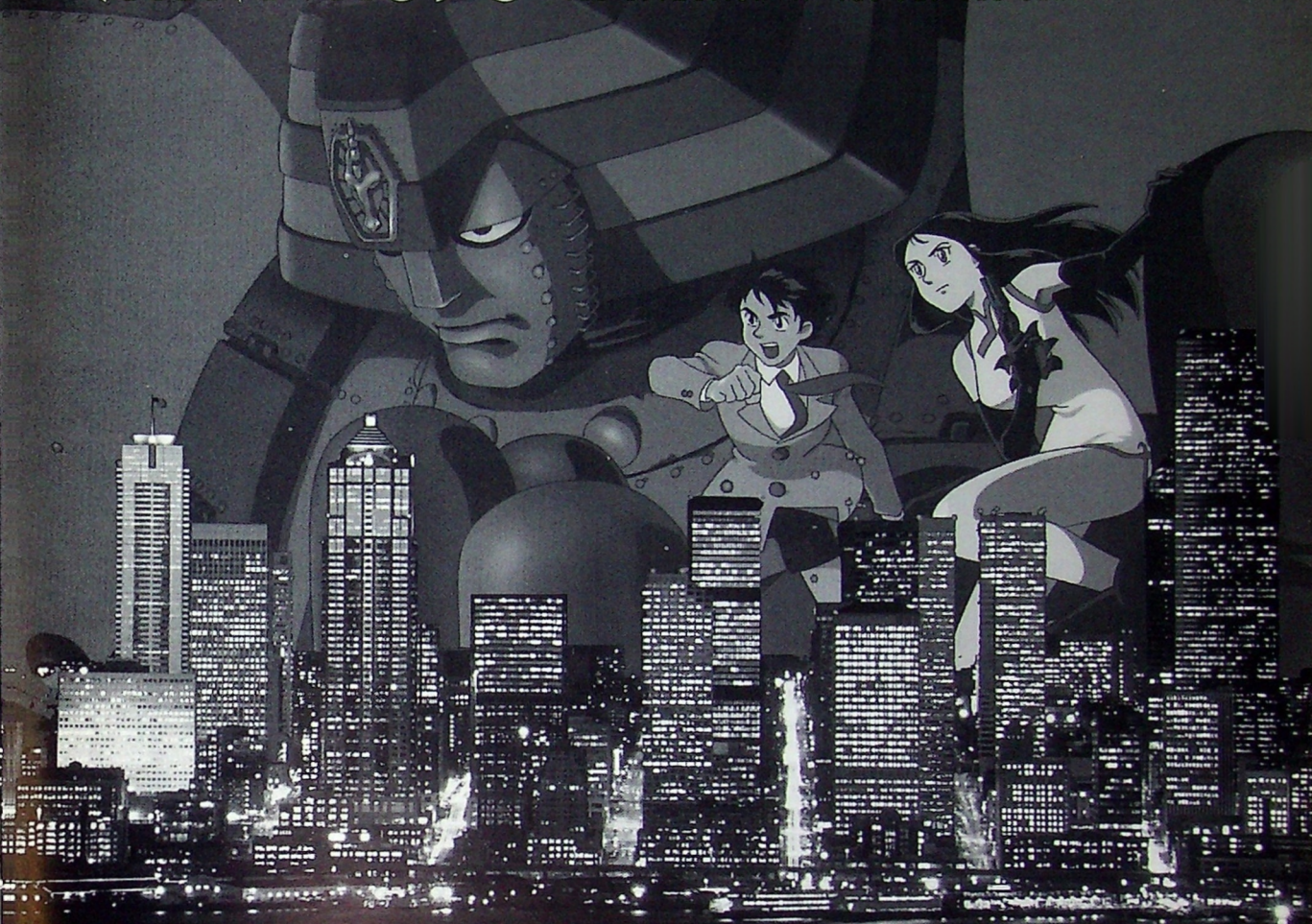
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GIANT ROBO

THE ANIMATION ★ THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL



BY GALEN JANG ★ TRANSLATIONS BY TONGHYUN KIM

★ THE BEST OF SIXTIES-ERA ANIME

Giant Robo is a welcome nostalgic turn back to anime's roots in the days of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, *Tetsujin 28* (Gigantor), *Mach Go! Go! Go!* (Speed Racer), and other classic shows. Fans of more recent anime will appreciate the production values of this series, which vastly surpasses that of most other recent OAVs. The first of the six-part series debuted in July '92. ★ Although it may appear to be that, Giant Robo is not a remake of any of these series. It is, in fact, an original story that blends in story elements and characters from classic series, notably the live-action *Johnny Sako* and his *Flying Robot* and *Tetsujin 28*. ★ The series is based on a manga series by Mitsuteru Yokoyama that was serialized in *NewType* magazine's *Genki* comic compilations. Mr. Yokoyama is best known for his manga renditions of Chinese novels such as *The Water Margin*, from which he borrows several characters for this series. The animation production staff includes such luminaries as director *Yasuhiro Imakawa*, mecha designer *Makoto Kobayashi* (*Dragon's Heaven*) and *Hideaki Anno* (director for *Nadia of the Mysterious Seas*).

EPISODE 1: THE BLACK ATTACHE CASE

BACKGROUND

Ten years before the beginning of our story, the Third Energy Revolution occurred. A compact, powerful and environmentally safe energy source called the Sizuma Drive was developed by a team of five scientists led by Professor Sizuma. The new invention transformed the world in a few short years. Sizuma Drive energy soon powers everything under the sun that needs electricity. Old power plants that pollute the environment are shut down.

There is a dark side to the new age. The mysterious tragedy of *Bashutarlle* destroyed an entire country. And a secret organization called **The Big Fire** used the new technology to build a shadow army and stupendous robotic weapons.

The name of the leader of Big Fire is not revealed, but throughout the story there are hints that it is one of the five scientists who created the Sizuma Drive. Directly under the command of the leader is a group called **The Ten**. The Ten are all Experts, individuals with superhuman powers derived from either martial arts or through mechanical and psionic means. There are three levels of command under the Ten—level A, B and C agents. They swear their loyalty by raising their hands Nazi-style and intoning "For Big Fire!"

Opposing the Big Fire is the **International Police Organization**. They too have Experts in their ranks. In the first episode, most IPO operatives who appear come from its Peking branch.

As Big Fire prepared to conquer the world, they hired (forced?) **Dr. Kusama** to produce the ultimate robotic weapon, **Giant Robo**. The IPO started an operation to gain control of this device. Dr. Kusama and his wife were both killed by Big Fire agents, but before he died Dr. Kusama arranged it so that Giant Robo would only obey the voice of his son, **Daisaku**.

◆ continued on page 6

1. DAISAKU KUSAMA

12-years old. The only person whose voice Giant Robo obeys. Resultingly, he becomes both the greatest weapon and the greatest weakness of the IPO. Both of his parents were killed by Big Fire. On top of having to cope with his personal tragedy, he has to run missions for the IPO. He demonstrates his courage and forbearance again and again.

2. GINREI

18-years old. She is the IPO Expert sent to rescue Professor Sizuma. She has the ability to teleport, but the effort required often saps her life force so much that it is not wise to do it very often. She is also an expert at hand-to-hand combat which she conducts with great agility, and carries a gun which has little recoil yet fires bullets that explode with the force of bazooka rockets. She is affectionate towards Daisaku, and treats him like a younger brother.

3. TETSUGUYU

25-years old. Another of the Experts who work for the IPO. His nickname is the Black Whirlwind. He is proficient enough with his twin axes to bring down helicopters. Despite his oafish temper and apparent disregard for human life and property damage, he is an innocent at heart. He has a crush on Ginrei, and regards Daisaku as his rival for his affections.

4. TAISO

27-years old. Another IPO Expert and apparent alcoholic. He is like an elder brother to Tetsugyu and often has to restrain him from committing gross mistakes. He feels very protective towards Daisaku and is probably the only one who is understanding towards him. As an Expert, he attains his powers through martial arts. His skills are the Jet Fists and the Magical Speed which enables him to run at supersonic speeds.

5. SCHOLAR KO

28-years old. Chief scientist of the Peking branch of IPO. He is the technical genius of the outfit, and uses two giant folding fans as his weapon.

6. KENJI MURASAME

An Expert working in the Paris branch of the IPO. His brother was killed during the operation to gain control of Giant Robo.

7. PROFESSOR SIZUMA

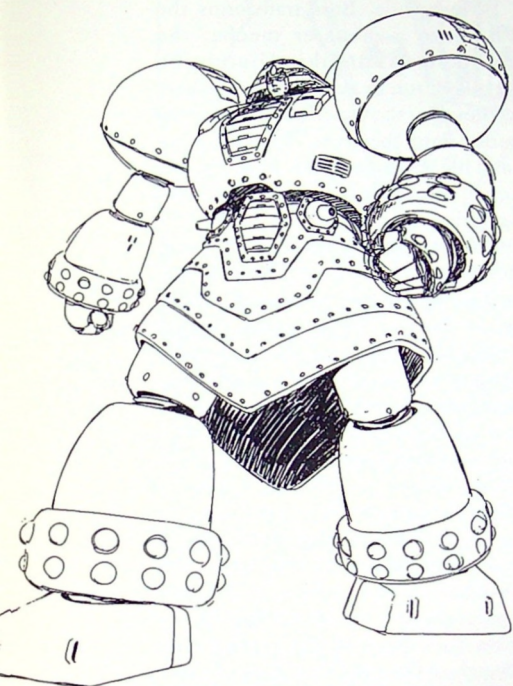
The leader of the team which invented the Sizuma Drive. He received a Nobel prize for the revolutionary invention. However, he hides the truth behind the Bashutarlle disaster and is in turn haunted by it. He fears Franken von Fogler greatly.

8. YOSHIE THE BLUE-FACED BEAST

Another expert from Ryouzanpaku assigned to the Peking base of IPO. With her blue skin, she looks like a dark-haired, grown-up Smurfette. Yoshie is a woman very much in touch with her masculine side (not surprising, see addendum). Her weapon is the quarter staff.



CHARACTERS



9. ISSEI DOJIN

His names mean Issei the Taoist even though he dresses like a Buddhist and uses Buddhist incantations (I don't know exactly what the creators of Giant Robo had in mind when they drew him—GJ). Anyway, Issei is an expert versed in magic. A lot of his magic involves papers inscribed with runes. He can use these to change shape and create illusions. As the story progresses, we may see more of his powers.

10. GENYA

He's a Level-A agent of Big Fire put in charge of the enigmatic Operation Still Earth by Big Fire's leader. As such, he even has authority over the Ten. He demonstrates a cool competence when dealing with recalcitrant subordinates, but he is also haunted by private nightmares of what happened ten years ago in Bashutarlle.

11. ALBERTO

38-years old. He is one of the Ten of Big Fire. He is an extremely powerful Expert capable of emitting waves of pure force from his body, hence his nickname Impact Alberto. He is a man of towering confidence and with enough power to back his huge ego.

Some years ago, he and another member of the Ten, Illusion Selbantes, clashed with Taiso. Selbantes died and Alberto lost his right eye. He has since been itching for a rematch. He has since replaced his eye with a laser monocle. His pride makes him uncomfortable if not downright hostile towards his supposed superior Genya.

12. IWAN

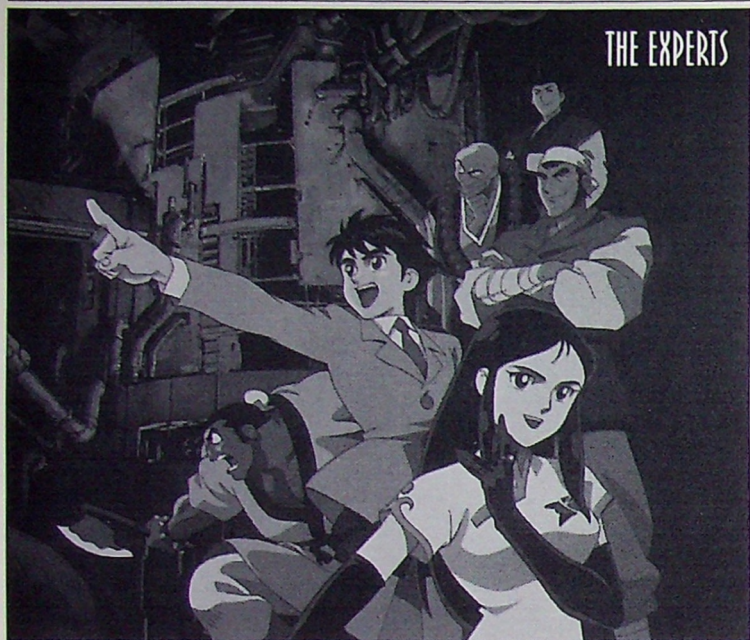
32-years old. He is Alberto's crony and a Level-B agent of Big Fire. Like Alberto, he detests Genya's leadership over him. He pilots the robot Uranus.

13. KO ENSHANU

Genya's mysterious bodyguard. He or she is masked and covered from head to toe by crimson armor and cloak. Ko has the ability to move at superfast speed as well as the ability to move through solid matter. Genya uses him to keep an eye on recalcitrant subordinates, namely Alberto.

14. FRANKEN VON FOGLER

One of the five scientists who developed Sizuma Drive. His contribution may have been greater than credited, however he is also raving mad. His madness and the development of the so-called Anti-Sizuma Drive may have been the reason for the millions of deaths at Bashutarlle. Presumably destroyed along with his invention in the disaster, ten years later his shade creeps back into the world of the living and threatens the world.



Now, Daisaku is called upon to complete a mission that promises to bring back the horrors of Bashutarlle upon the entire world.

STORY

During a dark and stormy night, Iwan drives toward a secret meeting. The radio news announcer reports the opening of a new power plant that will provide half of the world's energy needs. However, the designer of the plant, Professor Sizuma, is missing.

In the dark room of a castle, Genya, Alberto, Iwan and Ko Enshaku discuss the new weapon of the Big Fire. Genya remarks that the long war can at last be concluded. However, they have two of the three black attaché cases required to start Operation Still Earth. The third is in the hands of their enemy.

NANKING, CHINA. A hunted Professor Sizuma holds the third black attaché case and runs on top of a speeding train. Boss, a Level-C agent of Big Fire gloats as he prepares to shoot Sizuma. In the nick of time, a mysterious masked figure shoots Boss through the hand and asks Sizuma to give the

case to him instead. While Sizuma hesitates, the new arrival throws away the mask and cloak, revealing herself to be Ginrei. Ginrei grabs Sizuma and jumps to a train passing on the track just below them where Tetsugyu waits eagerly with open arms. No luck—instead of Ginrei, he catches Sizuma.

Enraged, Boss opens up the train and releases a swarm of helicopters. Ginrei shoots one down with her gun,

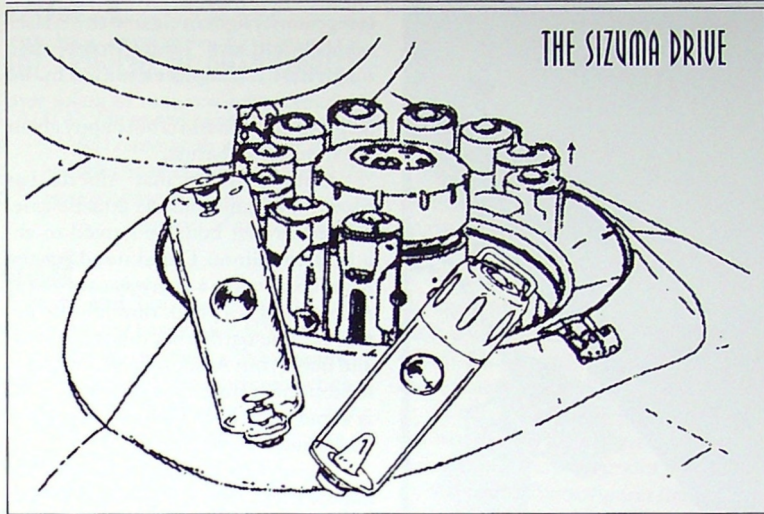
but there are too many. She concentrates and prepares to teleport, but Tetsugyu stops her saying that he will take care of everything. He then takes off with Professor Sizuma on his back and destroys the whole swarm with his twin axes. He turns around, expecting a grateful damsel, and instead gets "You fool! What're you going to do if something happens to the professor?"

Meanwhile, Boss transforms the train into a monster mecha, the **Ishinryu Akatsuki**. Ginrei and Tetsugyu run to avoid being crushed. As they near the waterfront, they are all hurled into the river. Then, a giant hand breaks through the cargo bay of a freight ship and saves them. Giant Robo has arrived!

With a contemptuous kick, Giant Robo sends the Ishinryu flying several blocks into a famous landmark. As Giant Robo approaches with earth-shattering force, Boss manages to transform Ishinryu into a hilariously deadly mecha with protruding spikes and whirling blades. With one blow, Giant Robo destroys Ishinryu and Boss, taking off just as Ishinryu explodes. Ginrei is impressed.

Back in the castle, Alberto gets the news of the failure. He says that the boy Daisaku needs to be taken care of. Genya just laughs and says that even the two cases they have now are more than enough to destroy Giant Robo. Iwan is





angry at the way Genya slights his boss. He charges and is stopped by Ko Enshaku. "Come now, don't make Ko's job difficult," Genya chides him. He then goes on to say that the third case can be recovered later. They already have enough to begin the operation.

PARIS, FRANCE. The bodies of two scientists are found hanging in the bell tower of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Suddenly, with a roar Paris is ripped apart. Several great fissures run through the city of light, spitting blue fire. As the fissures meet, the ground they enclose starts to rise, forming a two-tiered plateau with the cathedral at the very peak.

As **Kenji Murasume**, an Expert working for the Paris branch of the IPO looks on, a spectral figure holding a candle appears before him. Kenji asks who he is. The strange figure whispers "Revenge!" before fading like a ghost. The shocked Kenji says "No, impossible! You're Franken von Fogler!"

At the Peking branch of the IPO, **Shizuo Chujou**, chief of the branch, Tetsugyu, Ginrei and Scholar Ko look on in horror as the lights of Paris go out one by one in an expanding circle of darkness with Notre Dame Cathedral at its center. Ko reports that everything that is powered by Sizuma Drive energy has ceased to operate. Chujou asks him if he believes that the destruction

of Paris resembles what happened at *Bashutarlle* ten years ago. Ko holds his head in anguish and says "The Sizuma Drive is completely safe. Without it..." Chujou says that Sizuma Drive might be safe, but the shadow of *Bashutarlle* is now creeping over it.

Tetsugyu asks what's the connection between the bodies on Notre Dame and what happened. Chujou says that the bodies have been identified as two of the five scientists who developed Sizuma Drive. If Big Fire is planning to reproduce what happened in *Bashutarlle*, all the scientists who were involved would be potential obstacles.

The airship *Greta Garbo* arrives at the Peking base. Giant Robo is lowered into a hangar which used to be the cooling tower of an atomic plant. Taiso and Daisaku have a reunion with Ginrei and Tetsugyu. Tetsugyu is happy to see Taiso, but complains that he expected Taiso to help him in Nanking and not the little boy Daisaku who nearly bungled the whole mission. Taiso easily lifts the massive Tetsugyu and holds him in front of Giant Robo by the neck as he asks "Who saved you? Who?...Do you actually want to fight him (meaning Robo)?"

Ginrei checks with Sizuma in the infirmary. She is told that the professor is doing fine. However, he keeps muttering "It's coming. Fogler is coming."

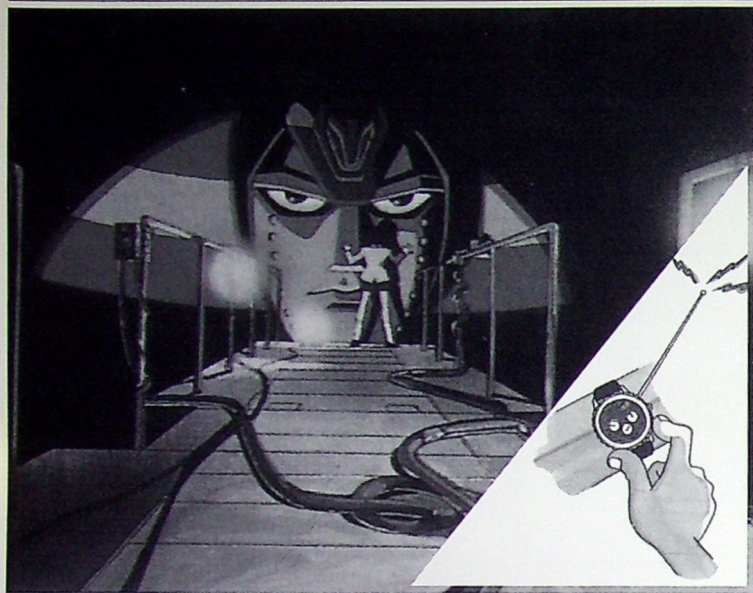
Daisaku checks out a construction machine which is replacing its Sizuma Drive core with a fresh energy bundle. Ginrei, Taiso and Tetsugyu join him. Taiso asks Daisaku to go with him to this great place to have some fun. Ginrei says that if Daisaku goes with them, he will turn into big, bad men just like them. She then asks if Daisaku wants to have a date with big sister. As visions of bliss swim before Tetsugyu's eyes, Daisaku takes off and says that he'll have to help with Giant Robo's maintenance.

Ginrei sighs and says that she's been rejected. Tetsugyu manages to summon up enough courage to ask for a date of his own. Ginrei merely says "Why don't you go to that nice place you mentioned?" Taiso sympathizes with his despondent friend and says "Want to have a drink?"

Back in Paris, the morning sun shows an extra body hanging from Notre Dame's bell tower. Now Sizuma is the only survivor of the original five. Scholar Ko reports that satellite remote sensors have detected power activities located in a hitherto undetected cavity under the cathedral. He surmises that it's the cause of the disaster. Chujou asks why they have made no further moves. Ko replies that they are probably waiting for the retrieval of the black attaché case.

The two men stand before the opened case. A strange variant of the Sizuma Drive is inside it. Chujou says that only one person can make something like this—Franken von Fogler. Ko says that's impossible. Fogler is supposed to be dead for ten years now. Chujou asks what is the purpose of creating something like this. Ko says that three of these can only be used to recreate the disaster of *Bashutarlle*.

The scene moves back ten years. Fogler is seen standing before an enormous spherical machine, making a speech. He says that the future will bring eternal light to mankind. In the past, mankind had tried to make light with wood, oil and even atomic power. At the same time, mankind has had to live with the danger of these power sources. Now at last mankind can have a beautiful night without fear.



His associates, Professor Sizuma and three other scientists, try to stop him because the system has not been tested. There is no telling what will happen if he activates it. Fogler contemptuously throws them off. He says that there is no reason for hesitation. He's willing to live or die with his creation.

As he inserts the cylinders into their proper slots, the spherical machine behind him opens and reveals an enormous eye. Fogler promises that some day he will bring about an even more beautiful night. As destruction spreads outward, Fogler says "Beautiful night...someday." (note: The background opera music is from L'Eliser d'Amore by Donizetti. The aria is sung by the lead character when he realizes that the most beautiful girl in town is in love with him!)

Kenji Murasame manages to sneak into the Big Fire secret base under Notre Dame. He overhears Genya telling his subordinates "Tell Alberto to hurry up and kill Sizuma. Fogler is getting impatient." He then sees a gigantic eye staring at him. "So it's really ready, Fogler," he says. Genya inserts the two anti-Sizuma Drives into their proper slots and says to himself "A little more and we'll finally finish what started ten years ago."

Alberto arrives in Peking. Iwan hands him some material concerning Bashutarlle. He sees a picture which seems to indicate that Genya and Ginrei are both children of Fogler. They run into a minor traffic problem caused by a drunken Tetsugyu. Knowing that the base is now undefended by any Expert, Alberto decides to make his move.

Later, Taïso and Tetsugyu are partying in the "nice place". Tetsugyu demonstrates amazing dexterity by trying to eat a lobster using only his foot. As the two sit under the moonlight, Taïso tells Tetsugyu that Daisaku is only a child. When he and Tetsugyu met as children, they weren't much older than that. Since then, they have both become what they wanted to be; Experts.

However, Taïso reflects, Daisaku didn't have a choice. The power, the responsibility and the tragedy of his parents' death were forced upon him. Taïso wonders if they could have handled such a situation as well as he did. He also says that the only thing they can do is to help him to become a proper adult. Tetsugyu muses, "But you know, when I was twelve I had already killed a man." Then, their emergency beepers start sounding.

Alberto breaks through the Peking base's defenses easily. After he knocks

out a whole crowd of guards, he contemptuously lights a cigar with his laser monocle and says "I thought this was a tough base." He is then joined by Ko Enshanku who was sent to make sure he performs. Alberto is not happy about his superior's distrust.

Chujou knows that Alberto has come for Sizuma and the attaché case. He orders that both be moved to another base. Ginrei, Daisaku and Scholar Ko get Sizuma to a getaway care just as Alberto and Ko break through the defenses. The battle that follows is short and fierce, but Alberto finally manages to stop them from escaping. Just as he is about to deliver the coup de grace, Taïso and Tetsugyu arrive.

Taïso tells Tetsugyu that he can handle these scum by himself. Alberto says he'll return the favor done to him by Taïso some years ago. Taïso quips "Oh, that's going to be a little expensive for you." The two clash, destroying everything in their path. Ko Enshanku watches on impassively.

On the getaway car, Scholar Ko says that they have to meet with the Greta Garbo and go to *Ryousanpaku* (Lian Shan Bo, the headquarters of the Experts (see Addendum)). He then presses Sizuma for the truth about the strange cylinder in the case. Sizuma breaks down and says "I will tell all. I should *never* have invented the Sizuma Drive." Then Iwan shows up with his mecha *Uranus*, which looks like an idol out of the Stone Age. *Uranus* lets loose two eye beams and our heroes are in grave trouble indeed.

Suddenly, back in the Peking base Giant Robo activates. Chujou says that's impossible, there's been no call from Daisaku. As Giant Robo smashes through the wall of the hangar and flies to save its master, it passes the battling Experts. Taïso looks up and Alberto promptly grabs him by the throat...

"... YOU SHOULD HAVE PAID MORE
ATTENTION.
NOW DIE!"

EPISODE 2: THE TRAGEDY OF BASHUTARILLE

NOTE: The second episode opens with a fast recap of the events in the first episode. Even though the video is 44-minutes long, there are only about 30 minutes of new animation.

STORY

Alberto and Taiso stand on the ruins of the Peking base of the IPO. Alberto has Taiso by the neck. "Now you will feel the agony I had suffered when I lost my friend **Serbante** and my right eye!" he snarls. He then proceeds to squeeze the life out of Taiso.

Inside the base, **Chief Chujo** finds the situation hopeless. He orders the base to be abandoned and readies to go into battle himself. "Make sure everyone stays well away from me," he says.

Just as we're about to find out why the chief is called **Silent Chujo**, two more experts arrive from **Ryouzanpaku**. They are **Youshi** and **Issei Doujin** who is giving **Youshi** a ride in the form of a horse. **Issei Doujin** says that such trivial foes shouldn't trouble the might of **Silent Chujo** and offers the services of the two experts instead.

As **Youshi** rushes toward the battle scene across the crowded streets of Pe-

king, **Issei** changes back into his human form and begins a spell, *No Mercy of the Buddha to the Wicked*—his jumbo-sized rosary beads then break free from the string and fly toward the battle scene.

Alberto is still savoring his earlier victory when **Ko Enshaku** pushes **Taiso** away and covers Alberto with his cloak. Alberto hardly has time to be angry with his "partner" when **Issei's** rosary beads impact on **Ko's** cloak.

Youshi strikes seconds later. She changes into hundreds of illusory copies to confuse Alberto who has to waste power by blasting the illusions away one by one.

Then a giant **Issei** towers above the battlefield. "Not even the **Ten** can escape once they fall under my spell." By this time, Alberto figures that there's no sense fighting any longer. He radios **Iwan** to rendezvous with him, then he steps into **Ko's** cloak and teleports away.

Back to **Daisaku**, **Ginrei**, **Tetsugyu**, **Scholar Go** and **Professor Sizuma**. They survived the destruction of their car, only to face **Iwan** and his **Uranus** robo. Now a gloating **Iwan** demands the black attaché case.

Giant Robo arrives to save his young master, only to slam into a powerful forcefield generated by the silly-looking **Uranus**. Try as it might, **Giant Robo** can't break through the

forcefield and slowly begins to overheat. **Daisaku** pleads with **Robo** to stop its heroic effort, but the stubborn machine continues on.

Striking from above, **Scholar Ko**, **Tetsugyu** and **Ginrei** make a surprise attack. **Iwan** foils them by holding **Daisaku** hostage. **Tetsugyu** is very unhappy about this, "Damn, I knew you were nothing but a drag."

Confident that he has the situation well in hand, **Iwan** begins to speak about the hypocrisy of the world. It seems that after the discovery of the **Sizuma Drive**, the process itself couldn't be stabilized. After they received the Nobel Prize, the scientists tried again and again to make it practical and failed.

Then, **Franken von Fogler** developed his version of the **Sizuma Drive**, but the testing ended in catastrophe when an entire country was consumed by the runaway reaction. But instead of rejecting the **Sizuma** system, the world embraced it, forgetting **Bashutarille**, **Iwan's** native country. "What a joke! The perfect energy system?" laughs a bitter **Iwan**.

Professor Sizuma runs up screaming "I am repenting my sin of ten years ago!" He grabs the anti-**Sizuma** cylinder from the attaché case and thrusts it into the power source of the destroyed car. In a burst of energy, the robot **Uranus** stops functioning. Without the forcefield to struggle against, **Giant Robo** slumps and sinks into the river.

Then a sphere of darkness expands to cover the entire city of **Peking**. **Chief Chujo** gets a nasty surprise when his cigarette lighter bursts into flames before going dead along with the entire base machinery.

A wounded **Taiso** comes into the room with **Youshi** and **Issei**. He says that he can power the computer and the communications system with the expert energies in his own body. Despite the protests of everyone present, he proceeds to rip out the power cords and hold them in his hands. The systems immediately go back online.

PARIS. **Genya** also finds out about the activation of the third drive cylin-



der. He is forced to act immediately because the activation will interfere with the two drive cylinders already in place. Then he spots a suspicious character whose hairstyle is quite evident even under the black hood that's the standard uniform of **Big Fire**. **Kenji Murasame** the **Immortal** once again lives up to his nickname by getting away alive.

Genya orders immediate activation. Notre Dame Cathedral is destroyed as the giant eye sphere rises through the rubble. "It's exactly like the tragedy of **Bashutarlle**," says Kenji. A vast hologram of **Fogler** towers above Paris. "Now I will show you what real night is like. The Great Monster Sphere **Fogler**."

In Peking, the shocked members of **IPO** listen to the litany of **Fogler**. **Fogler** wants the world to pay back the debt

Back on the outskirts of Peking, everyone is still in shock at the enormity of the disaster unleashed by just one small cylinder. Beside the bestilled **Uranus**, **Professor Sizuma** confesses his sins. "Everything that happened is my fault. I will tell you the truth of what happened ten years ago." Again he is interrupted, this time permanently. **Iwan** shoots him.

Suddenly, a fully functional **Giant Robo** rises from the river. "How? How can **Giant Robo** move under the influence of the **Bashutarlle** effect which cancels out all power?" cries **Iwan**.

Scholar **Go** and **Ginrei** look over the mortally wounded **Sizuma**. In a fit of rage, **Ginrei** goes over and rips out the anti-**Sizuma** drive cylinder and all power systems begin to function again.



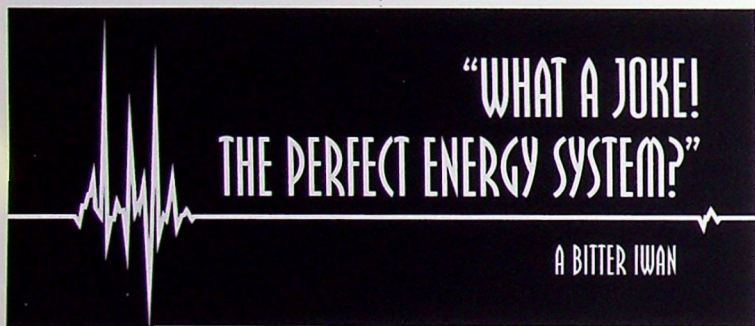
Alberto replies "I don't know. Everything is done under the orders from the **Big Fire**."

As **Professor Sizuma** lies dying, he mutters that **Fogler** is not complete without all three drive cylinders in the same place. He turns to **Daisaku**: "You're our only chance. The fate of the world depends on the **Robo** and you. Only you can stop **Fogler**." As he tries to tell him why, **Daisaku** finishes for him; "I see, **Robo** is nuclear-powered." Then the professor dies.

Ginrei looks out upon the restored lights of Peking. "What a beautiful night. But people forget dirty things too easily..."

ADDENDUM

Mitsuteru Yokoyama borrowed several characters from his other work, the manga rendition of **The Water Margins**. The **Water Margins** is the Chinese equivalent of **Robin Hood** and his **Merry Men**. There are several English translations available under the title **The Water Margins** or **All Men Are Brothers** or **Bandits**



owed him for ten years. He wants revenge against everyone who uses the **Sizuma Drive**.

Chief **Chujo** remembers what happened ten years ago. After the **Bashutarlle** disaster, **Fogler's** invention created a null energy field which canceled out all energy systems on Earth for seven days. Without the power necessary to maintain civilization, one third of the earth's population died. Now **Fogler** wants to recreate that disaster.

Genya remembers how he survived at the center of the **Bashutarlle** holocaust. His hatred began when the world blamed everything on **Fogler** and welcomed **Sizuma's** improvement on **Fogler's** work with open arms. He waited for the day when the entire world was filled with **Sizuma drives**. Now, with the replica drives that are recalibrated to act against them, he will have his revenge.

Uranus begins to rise, but **Giant Robo** slams it against the mountainside before it can generate a forcefield and begins to take the poor robot apart with **Iwan** still clinging to it for dear life. In desperation, **Iwan** ejects with **Uranus' head** and escapes. **Giant Robo** continues shooting cannon rounds at them long after they're out of range. **Daisaku** has to stop the seemingly infuriated machine from shooting indefinitely.

Beneath the waters, **Alberto** and **Iwan** reunite. **Alberto** had viewed the fight between **Giant Robo** and **Uranus**, and like **Iwan** he, too, is puzzled as to how **Giant Robo** can operate while under the **Bashutarlle** effect. Both he and **Iwan** come to the same conclusion regarding its power source. "But Master **Alberto**," says **Iwan** "didn't even the **BF Organization** abandon them when the **Shizuma Drive** was invented?"

of the Marsh or Shui Hu Zhuan. There may also be other translations.

For gamers, Koei released a game called *Bandit Kings of Ancient China* which is based on the same book. It is also available as a computer game and also possibly as a video game. It is very similar to two other Koei historical simulations games, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Nobunaga's Ambition*.

The story of *Water Margins* is set in 12th century China during the Song Dynasty. There is the usual apathetic emperor and corrupt officials who will do anything to fatten their purses and further their influences. 108 heroes of Lian Shan Bo, led by Song Jiang, form an army and vow to fight injustice, or as they call their mission "Enforcing the laws of Heaven." At the end of the story, the heroes find out that they are actually the human incarnations of 108 stars of heaven sent to earth for this very purpose. All of the Experts working for the Peking Base of IPO are from this story.

Tetsugyu literally means the Iron Bull. That's what Li Kui, the Black Whirlwind's friends call him. Li Kui is one of the dearest friends of Song Jiang. He is also the most terrifying warrior among the 108 heroes. He has zero regard for human life, and his twin axes kill at the slightest provocation. He is known to have killed a whole den of tigers without working up a sweat; hacking through an army is just child's play to him.

Despite his shortcomings, he is also completely honest and absolutely loyal to friends and loving towards his family. Still, his solution to any problem is always "Kill!" The humanitarian Song Jiang has to hold back his blood lust constantly. A wise Taoist who met this human Terminator comments that he's the reincarnation of the Star of Death, sent to Earth to punish the impiety of Man.


Taiso is the Japanese name for Dai Zhong, the Magic Messenger. Dai Zhong was a jail warden for Song Jiang when he was sentenced wrongly for a crime. He became Song Jiang's friend in a short time. Later, when Song Jiang was about to be executed for writing a rebellious poem, Dai Zhong decided to throw in his lot with the bandits. Dai Zhong can run at super speed

once he ties two idols of gods inscribed with the proper spells on his legs. He can run continuously for two to three hundred miles a day without tiring. He is not as fearsome in battle as Li Kui, but he's definitely smarter. Once, he managed to scare Li Kui by tying his magic idols on Li Kui's legs and forcing the born killer to run around at super speed.

Scholar Ko is the Japanese name of Wu Yong the Star of Heavenly Wisdom. Wu Yong was a friend of Chao Gai, a Lian Shan Bo bandit king before Song Jiang. He is a scholar of the first and seems to understand human nature with absolute clarity. Most of the heroes of Lian Shan Bo owe their lives to his machinations. Many are recruited because of his convoluted Machiavellian schemes. However, he never turns his awesome power of intrigue and manipulation against his friends. Since the corrupt officials always have fear and distrust in their hearts and the 108 heroes always trust their lives to each other, Wu Yong's schemes always come out on top.

Youshi, in *The Water Margins*, is Yang Zhi the Blue-faced Beast, a male character. Yang Zhi is the descendant of a famous Chinese general, but his family has become so poor over the generations that he has to sell his ancestors' sword to make a living. Later, he gets a two-bit job running errands for a corrupt official and messes up big time.

In order to avoid a sudden height reduction by the headman's axe, Yang Zhi joins up with the bandits of Lian Shan Po. He is pretty even-headed and doesn't have the flair of a lot of the other heroes.

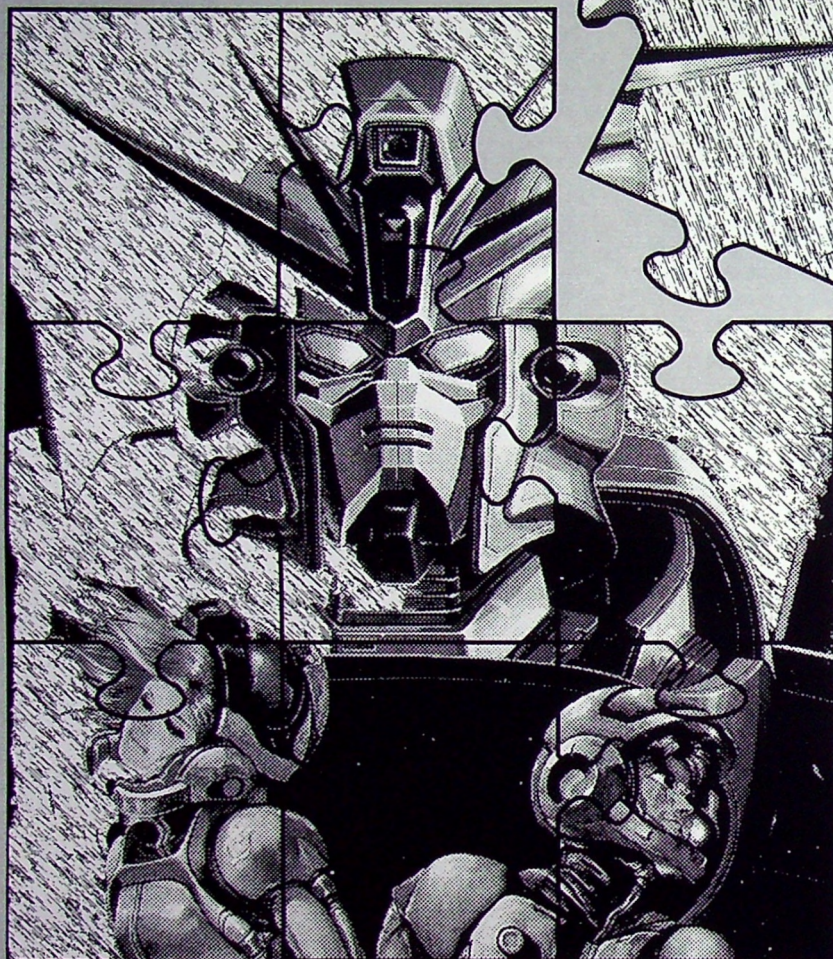
Issei Doujin is originally Gon Sun Sheng the Dragon in the Clouds. He is the most powerful magic user in the book except for his master Luo Zhen Ren. Gon Sun, unlike Issei Doujin, is a fanatic Taoist who refuses to even set foot in a Buddhist temple. He also spends a lot of time with his master studying magic. Whenever his friends get into big trouble with users of black magic, they have to pull him away from his studies. By the way, Issei is the Japanese translation of I Ching, Gon Sun Sheng's Taoist name. 

IS IT JOHNNY SAKO'S
FLYING ROBOT?



IS IT YUL BRYNNER
IN THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS?





SALES

RENTALS

LASERDISCS

VIDEOTAPES

MAIL ORDER

Solving the Anime Puzzle....

JAPAN VIDEO

INCORPORATED

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CHOICE CUTS

THE REVIEWS



RANMA 1/2

OPENING VOCAL

Various Artists

Pony Canyon • PCCG-00190

¥2900

★★

This very short album (barely over 28 minutes long) may be a must for the hardcore Ranma 1/2 fan, but for most fans the album may seem to be too expensive and uneven.

The album presents the tracks in chronological order starting with the series' first opening and moving on from there. The album really hits its stride with the idol group songs by Ribon (Little Date) and CoCo (Many Memories). These girl groups may not deliver technically stunning vocals but there is an undeniable energy and innocence to these two songs. For that reason they seem to truly capture the Takahashi spirit of the series and that makes them the best two songs the series has to offer. Close behind is Zetail Part 2. With its hyper classical music opening riff and hyperspeed delivery it compensates for the singer's poor vocal skill with energy and unabashed silliness.

The final two tracks on the album are songs that I wasn't aware of as a cursory fan who hadn't seen any of the last season's episodes. Of these the most humorous (albeit unintentionally) is Love Shocker—CAN'T STOP IT by Vision. If you ever wanted to know what a Japanese version of Queen sounded like here is a pretty expensive way of finding out. Every Queen trademark is in this song from the mock operatic vocals to an imitation Brian May guitar lead. The unfortunate thing is that this song is D.O.A. from the opening bars. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery except when the imitators can't write music.

Lasting less than half an hour, yet only costing around \$2.00 less

than CDs with twice as much music, Ranma 1/2 may have some good music but is only for the hardcore Ranma fan with money to burn.

Chris Keller



MAISON IKKOKU

FOREVER REMIX

Various Artists

Kitty Records • KTCR-1166

¥2800

★★

There may be an album out there with a more bizarre premise, but discounting Rhino Records' Golden Throats collection, I really doubt it. The Forever Remix is a collection of extended dance remixes of pop songs from Kitty Television's seven-year old production of Rumiko Takahashi's Maison Ikkoku.

For some time I've felt that dance remixes were getting out of hand, but one listen to Forever Remix convinced me of it. The closest comparison I can make to this album was an album called Fans by Malcolm McLaren whose main idea was to merge classic opera with dance music. Like Forever Remix, the results are interesting to say the least.

Songs like the adult contemporary-styled Sunny Shining Morning are mixed with a slow techno-style drum beat and a score of percolating synthesizers that creates the impression that two entirely different songs are playing at the same time. Of the ten songs on the album, seven were composed by Picasso whose 1990 remix of the song Cinema was popular enough to convince Kitty to support this project. That remix, with its flamenco guitar and Italian accordion background, is featured here along with a slightly modified 1992 version. What is surprising is that some of these experiments actually work.

Songs such as the slow, haunting Fantasy (Jam Slam-ica Mix) are completely reborn. The slow high-

tech reggae backbeat of the remix gives the song a whole new life making what was a standard middle of the road ballad into a "skanking good time". But the best of the ten tracks is the one with the least amount of reworking. Hello Sadness is given a slightly faster beat and a few artificial rough edges that just makes the song slightly tougher but otherwise unchanged.

However, the worst track, Begin The Night (The Neanderthal Mix), just drags down a perfectly good song with an overproduced plodding beat. Other songs suffer the same fate, having to deal with frenetic House, Techno or even Industrial revamping.

Overall, this album is uneven and some of the creative ideas just don't work. However as most anime CDs seem to be becoming increasingly conservative and formulaic the sheer attempt to reinvent a piece of anime's past is admirable, if only in its sheer audacity. The problem with the album is that while the producers had the imagination to try many of these off-the-wall arrangements their studio savvy was too limited to bring off these experiments. If you like dance music and are willing to listen to a very strange experimental album, Forever Remix may suit your fancy.

Chris Keller



SPEED

Music by Alpha Team

Strictly Hype Records • SHCD 106

\$8.00

★★★

It is almost impossible for anyone with childhood memories of Speed Racer not to crack a smile when listening to this three track dance EP. While most of the music for Speed Racer was originally created for the original Japanese version of the show Mach Go, Go, Go, the opening theme was entirely a US contribution and this EP reinvents

it for a whole new generation. The Alpha Team (DJ Attack and Dane) a duo of Chicago area dance club producers have taken this one U.S. contribution and some wonderfully chosen vocal samples and sound effects to create three dance mix versions of the Speed Racer Theme. Combining samples and some preprogrammed drum machine tracks and synthesizers the Alpha Team have created three distinctly different versions of the tune all with a similar dance mix style a la the popular dance club group 808 State but each track has a different emphasis.

Speed Club Mix stresses the Industrial synthesizer riffs and keeps the pace fast and steady. There are only a few vocal samples from the series in this version of the track but it is the easiest to dance to.

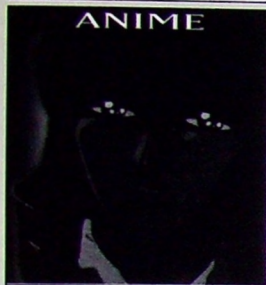
Speed Radio Edit is a shortened version of the Club Mix designed to get radio airplay. Again the producers chose to keep the beats fast and steady, but the real irony is that this is the track that gets the least airplay.

Speed Hardcore is currently getting the most attention. Using a clever mix of vocal samples from the three person cast of the series, this track reveals all the subliminal sexual tension embedded in the series which most of us didn't pick up as kids. I don't want to give too much away, but after listening to the Hardcore mix the phrase "Here he comes, here comes Speed Racer" will never have the same connotation it used to.

For those of you looking to relive your childhood TV memories through popular music I would also point out that there are dance tunes from the Doctor Who series as well as Gerry Anderson's Thunderbirds Are Go. For those of you looking for Japanese animation...well I've always been partial to the L.A. punk group the Dickies version of the Gigantor theme. Speed by the Alpha Team can currently be found in larger music shops who carry either independent recordings or who have an extensive Dance section such as Tower Records.

Chris Keller

★★★★ CLASSIC
★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR



SILENT MÖBIUS (DUB)

Streamline Pictures



Having previously seen *Silent Möbius* in Japanese, I was looking forward to a translated version, especially one on a wide screen, that would convey the cool, mystical, shadowy style of the original. I was very, very disappointed.

In its original version, *Silent Möbius* presented a mixture between many of the all-girl cast science fiction animes so prevalent in the industry, and the cyberpunk look of *Blade Runner*, with a little supernatural flavor dashed in. Both the character design and backgrounds in *Silent Möbius* are very well done, with blues, greens, and grays, conveying a feeling of mystery and coldness (compared to *Akira*, where reds, oranges, and yellows conveyed heat, chaos and violence). The storyline is not as compelling as some other manga-to-anime translations (and is inferior to the *Silent Möbius* manga), but the action is engaging, and the film is fast paced, not lingering too long in any one part of the plot.

Unfortunately, the Streamline dubbing of this film has destroyed all of the captivation the original brought. It's not that the translation wasn't accurate: like *Akira*, *Silent Möbius* was substantially faithful to the original in its dialogue. However, the voice acting, to put it bluntly, is horrible. Katsumi Li-queur sounds like a Saturday morning cartoon voice (which definitely goes not with the strong personality presented in the film) or, worse, someone trying to sell you shampoo or other toiletries over the radio. In the scene where Katsumi and her mother get re-acquainted at the hospital, the voice acting is so badly done, I found myself wonder-

ing when Katsumi was going to ask her mother if she ever had that "not-so-fresh-feeling." I'm not kidding!

This one flaw offsets the entire mood of the film. *Silent Möbius* is supposed to have a dark, moody, mystic feel to it, but the bad voice acting completely disrupts this. It's hard to feel for the characters on the screen when you can't help but laugh at what they're saying. For one who enjoyed the original, the unintentional humor found in the English dubbing is quite painful, more so knowing that it might not have been that way, but for one or two voice actors.

It's been said that Streamline's role in the industry is to get interested viewers hooked on anime with their dubbed, mass-market targeted films and videos. Then, as the previously interested become serious fans, they later gravitate to dubbed and subtitled US Renditions, US Manga Corps, and AnimEigo works. However, even taking into account that Streamline doesn't target the discriminating anime fan, *Silent Möbius* is in terrible need of a makeover, either a redubbing, or a subtitled, or else it will not do well even in the mass video market. It's instances like this that keep subtitled the preferred means of English-language translation among anime fans, and keep the Japanese-based industry reluctant to put more of their products across the Pacific.

Shawn Dudley



PROJECT A-KO (DUB)

U.S. Manga Corps/

Central Park Media • 1998-7-1068-3

\$39.95



In 1992, U.S. Manga Corps/Central Park Media decided to release an English-dubbed version of the first *Project A-ko*, which earlier they had released

as a subtitled video. The actual dubbing was done by Island Communications, a company based in Great Britain, although Island apparently used American voice actors.

On a personal note the casting was something of a disappointment for me; I was looking forward to hearing A-ko, B-ko and C-ko sounding like extras from Masterpiece Theatre. On a more critical note, I wasn't real impressed with the production qualities of the English-language presentation.

For starters, a very flat monotone was used for the audio track. Although the dialogue still managed to convey much of the original quality of the story, a great deal of the emotional depth of the characters is lost. This has the double impact of making the audio track sound somewhat tinny and making the characters seem rather flat.

This is especially devastating to C-ko; my favorite cute 16-year-old-going-on-six is transformed into a perky blonde with oversized eyes. As I sat watching, all the nauseating childishness that endeared me to her in such a sweetly sadomasochistic way just melted away beneath the dialogue. The English C-ko had about as much emotional impact on me as my last college career counselor did, as she enthusiastically rattled on about the opportunities opening up in computer accounting. I felt in dire need of hearing the soulful sound of Michie Tomizawa's (the original C-ko) voice.

The second point of contention is the apparent intent to Americanize the dialogue. The three ko's come out sounding like characters from a high school sitcom. Not only is this not apropos to the setting of an exclusive, Old World-style private girls' school, but it eliminates the exaggerated femininity that was an important component of their characters (though how much of it would have survived the audio track anyway is probably debatable). I especially missed B-ko's emotional transition from a snotty, spoiled upper-crust establishment type to a vengeance-crazed techno-psychopath, via her frustrations with A-ko. The voice track bounced over that completely.

The English *Project A-ko* 1 avoids the cardinal sins of past dubs. No footage is eliminated and the original script is left intact, albeit the quality of the delivery, in this

reviewer's opinion, is open to improvement. Hardcore A-ko fans would probably not be pleased, but novice viewers will probably find it appealing, especially with the high quality (and English-language/instrumental) BGM track still in place.

Still, this is not the sort of piece which will win over either jaded fans or sophisticated novice audiences into becoming active consumers. There is a pressing need for truly dedicated and creative voice dubbing staffs for English-language anime, and hopefully both audiences and video companies will start to realize that. In the meantime, to those who care, break out the kryptonite.

James Matsuzaki



SANCTUARY

Story: Sho Fumimura

Art: Ryoichi Ikegami

Shogakukan/Viz Communications

\$4.95



Akira Hojo and *Chiaki Asami* are from different worlds. Or so everyone thinks. Hojo, a Yakuza gangster, and Asami, an assistant to a member of the Japanese Diet, are united by a common history and ambition. Their story, with script by *Fist of The North Star* writer Sho Fumimura (aka Buronson) is a saga of two ambitious men out to change their individual worlds and their nation, and as a consequence the entire world.

The core of the story is Fumimura's talent at balancing characters filled with ruthless ambition who still maintain codes of ethics that leave the reader rooting for them while repulsed by their savage tactics. For readers of *Crying Freeman* and *Mai the Psychic Girl*, Ryoichi Ikegami's art will be very familiar. Without the exotic nature of those

other titles, Ikegami has filled Sanctuary with many familiar character designs. His composition and use of photographs to create an aura of reality into the story however, makes this one of his most distinctive works.

Currently at nine issues, Sanctuary still has many unanswered questions. As with all comics, one can safely assume that the two main characters will succeed at their respective struggles. However, what will be the fate of the many intriguing supporting characters. Will Tokai, the savage strong arm gangster, survive trying to organize the Yakuza in Hong Kong? Will the loyal aide Tashiro survive as Hojo's chief lieutenant? Will the beautiful police inspector Kyoko Ishihara ever consummate her passion for Hojo?

So far the story has focused on the rise to power of the Yakuza Hojo. Asami's rise in the political world still lags behind and will certainly be explored in future issues. Whether the U.S. readership will continue to follow the story as it delves into political intrigues in the Japanese Diet remains to be seen. Certainly those who have followed the story to this point will continue.

The English script translated by Matt Thorn seems raw enough to seem unaltered. Thorn has managed to create a script that gives each of the characters a unique voice. Effective dialogue has never been a strong suit in Viz's translated comics. The primary reason seems to be the obsessive impulse to Americanized each of the titles to compete with Marvel and D.C. for sales.

An example of this in Sanctuary is the idiotic use of the term "Don" to describe the Yakuza mob boss or Oyabun. Now this title has been used in many U.S. movies (Black Rain) and comics (Frank Miller's works as well as the X-Men titles written by Chris Claremont). So it seems ironic to see more Japanese terminology and culture in an American comic than a Japanese comic. Still the editors at Viz seem to find it necessary to dress up their products to be as American in origin as possible. However, this confuses the reader to some extent because it blurs the line between the Yakuza and the Mafia which is a very distinctive difference that seems important to the story.

All this aside, Sanctuary is one of the most stimulating reads on the comic market today. Of all the Japanese comics published in the U.S.

since the late '80s, Sanctuary ranks, along with Lone Wolf and Cub and Nausicaä as one of the best Japanese comics ever released and is wholeheartedly recommended.

The story contains graphic sex and violence and is recommended for mature audiences both for these elements as well as the emphasis of plot development and characterization over action. Check it out and then tell a friend.

Chris Keller



MS GUNDAM F-91

System: Super Famicom

Masaya

★★★★★

Thirty years after Char's final assault on the Earth, dissent is spreading. Protests and riots against the Earth government are common, and in recent years a terrorist organization challenges the authority of the Earth Federal Military.

The EFM reportedly chased them down and destroyed them at Venus. However, in the past year the terrorists have returned to the Earth Sphere and renewed their attacks calling themselves the Olds Mobile Suits because of the refitted Zion mecha they use.

In response to this threat, the EFM forms a new elite group, the 13th Division, to take care of any organized opposition. The 13th division is assigned to the space battleship *Abram*, which is transporting the experimental Mobile Suit Gundam F-90. Captain Gardner, commander of the *Abram*, has been ordered to destroy the Olds Mobile Forces using the F-90, and return the data collected to be used in the Gundam F-91.

You play the role of Belf Skrett, a 19-year old mobile suit pilot and pilot of the F-90. Ranked

against you are Charles Rochester and his squadrons of RF Zakus, RF Doms, RF Gelgoogs, and more. But you don't go alone; you have squadrons of wingmen composed of RGM-89 Jegan, RGM-109 Heavy Guns, and F-71 G-Cannons who will assist you. However, their piloting skills are nowhere near as good as yours, so you must protect them as well as the *Abram* during enemy mobile suit attacks.

At the start of each level, you pick which Gundam you will be using. At the first level, you have only two choices; the F-90A (Assault Type) or F-90D (Destroid Type). Each one only has Head Vulcans, Beam Sabers, and a Beam Rifle. At each level you advance to you get more weapons on each unit, and at later levels you can pilot the F-90V (V.S.B.R. Test Type) and finally, the F-91.

Game play is divided into two segments; a tactical portion and a combat portion. In the tactical portion, you are presented with a wargame-style map of the area you are in, showing the location of the *Abram*, the F-90 and its wingmen, and the enemy suits. The player moves the F-90, then the wingmen and enemy suits move. The *Abram* is stationary. You attack enemy units by moving the F-90 icon on top of an enemy suit icon. At this point, the screen changes to the inside of the F-90's cockpit.

The screen is divided into three segments; a large view screen area that shows outside scenery and enemy units; then a smaller status display and radar screen. Enemy mobile suits show up as blips on the radar. You use the thumb pad to maneuver and get the enemy suits into the "V-Zone"; a 45° arc in front of the F-90. Once a blip is inside this V, it flashes, indicating it is a valid target. You then press the A button to select the target, then you select which weapon you are attacking with, and press A again to attack.

If multiple targets are inside the V when you press the A button, they will all be selected and you can attack all of them. Which weapon you should use depends on range to the target. Your targeting arc is divided into three range bands; short, medium, and long. Beam Sabers and Vulcans are good for short range; Beam Rifles and Machine Guns are good for medium range; and V.S.B.R.s and bazookas are good for long range.

Whether or not you hit the target, as well as whether you are hit by

enemy attacks, is determined by the computer, and based on your Pilot Skill and luck. Your Pilot Skill starts out low and improves as you advance levels; on level one the Zakus will kick you around a lot but by level 4 they're simply an annoyance. Each level, the scenery and what Mobile Suits you fight changes. You fight the Olds Mobile forces in space, on the moon, in the desert, Arctic, ocean, atmosphere, and inside colonies as the game progresses. You start out fighting RF Zakus, and as you advance levels you'll be attacked by RF Doms, RF Desert Doms, RF Güfs, RF Gelgoogs, RF Zugocks, Denan Zons, and Berge Darases. Finally, on level 12, you confront Charles in his custom Gelgoog.

The game plays very smoothly, once you get the hang of the controls. While it may not appeal to fans of "scroll-n-scrag" shoot-em ups, it will appeal to those who appreciate tactical combat games with arcade-style fighting. Another nice thing about this game is it will appeal to all Mobile Suit Gundam fans. The flavor of the early levels of the game, when you have limited weaponry and are fighting uprated versions of One Year War mobile suits, will appeal to fans of Gundam, War in the Pocket, or Stardust Memory. The later stages of the game, where you gain powerful weapons and fight mobile suits from F-91 will appeal to fans of Gundam ZZ, Char's Counterattack, or F-91.

Mark Schumann

MACROSS 2036

Systems: PC Engine CD/

TurboGrafx CD

Masaya • NCSD2007

¥7200

★★★★★

It has been approximately two decades since the end of the war between the Zentraedi and the United Earth. A new generation has emerged to continue the legacy. You are Camilia Maria Geenus, daughter of ace pilots Maximilian Geenus and Miria 639. In the cockpit of the newest Strike Valkyrie and with the help of your parents' old friend Admiral Britai and your "senpai" Rod Sheen, you are to defend the Earth against a newly assembled Zentraedi fleet.

Macross 2036 is one of the best looking shooting games on the P.C.



It has rich, vibrant colors and extremely smooth multi-plane scrolling. The lengthy animated sequences are all very nicely done and they give you time to rest after some very intense shooting. The characters were designed by none other than Haruhiko Mikimoto, the original character designer for both the T.V. series and the motion picture. Some of the background music is also from the original series, and it makes you feel like you are watching the animation.

There are seven long stages to this game. Experience points are given each time you score a hit. Starting from the beginning of the second stage, or if you continue after a game over, you have up to 14 special weapons to choose from depending on the amount of points you scored. Your Valkyrie transforms from a fighter to a battroid at the end of a stage. Firing is done automatically, the two buttons pivot the Valkyrie from left to right and vice versa.

There are also four types of power-ups to help you. The first two increase your firepower and can be found after you destroy a certain type of enemy. The other two give you an extra 1-UP in the form of a Minmay doll or temporary invincibility. Those two are hidden throughout the game.

All in all, it is at least an above average shooting game. The graphics and music are very well executed. The game play is quite challenging, and yet not to a point that discourages novice players. For Macross fans like myself, it brings back good old memories. So if you own a P.C. Engine CD or TurboGrafx CD and happen to find it on the market, you should consider picking one up.

Helpful Hints!

For invincibility and/or 99 lives, do the following in the option screen:

I, RIGHT, LEFT, II, UP, DOWN, II, I, II, I

Ronnie Kwong



Bandai

★★★★

¥800

Assembly: Easy

Painting: Moderate

The Mad Modeler

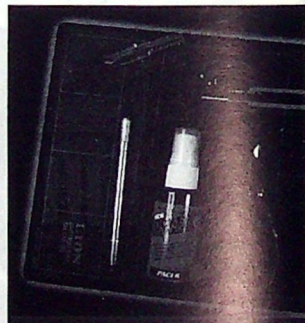
by Tony Del Grosso

Hello, and welcome to the first installment of the Mad Modeler. In this column we will be taking a look at all the different types of kits from Japan: injection mold, vinyl and resin. We will cover basic techniques for beginners, review kits on the market, and also talk about advanced techniques.

Before we begin there are a few items, and rules you will need know. Make sure that your hands are clean. You don't want to get any kind of oil on your kits. Make sure you work in a well-lit and ventilated area. You should have some type of drop cloth just in case you spill your glues or paint, unless you want your desk to be covered with all kinds of junk.

Here is a list of some basic equipment:

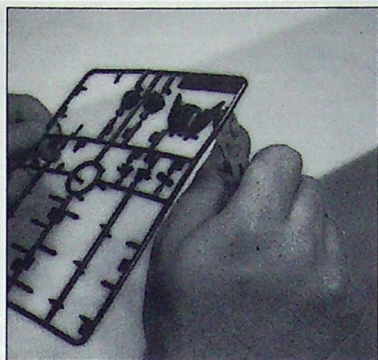
- clippers
- exacto knife
- utility knife
- cutting board
- permanent marker
- pacer plasti zap (optional)
- pacer kicker for plastic (optional)
- (wet) sandpaper (optional)



The kit I am going to review is the Tekkaman Blade $\frac{1}{16}$ scale #1 from Bandai. Most of the parts were already colored, so the kit overall involved little painting. Over the last few years certain Bandai kit lines had a subhead known as iro-plau (colored plastic), but this kit did not have that title. Since it is already mostly colored this kit will be easy to put together.

Before you begin you should look over the instructions and make sure that all the parts are there. Then take your marker and on the inside of all or most of the pieces write down the numbers that the parts relate to on the tree. You should do this so if you forget which part you just pulled off of the tree you will still know its number.

Before we begin some of you are probably wondering why we don't paint the kit first. I paint the kit once I've put it all together.



To remove the parts, use the clippers and snip the part leaving a tiny portion still attached to the kit. You want to do this because sometimes you might remove a portion to the kit when you initially take it off the tree. Now, with either your exacto or utility knife shave off the tiny portion that is left on the actual model part. If you need to, use a piece of ultra fine sandpaper (wet variety) to sand the area.

One of the hardest parts to build was the volltekka (wing unit). Since it was a moving piece, I took my time putting it together. I wanted to be sure that the seam was not too exposed otherwise it might cause some problems getting it to work right.

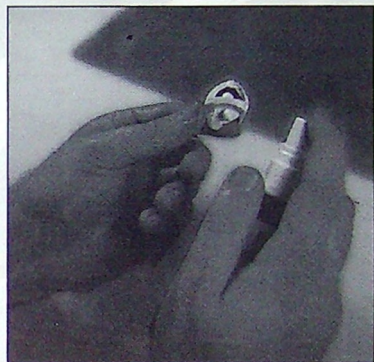
Today you really don't need any glue to put any of the Bandai kits together because they are all snap together, but I had problems putting the torso together and I broke some of the snap pins. I used some of the platzap and the zip to glue the parts together. Be careful when using the zip. Even though it says it is safe for plastic be careful. If you touch it while it is still wet, you will leave a fingerprint in your kit. Make sure that the kicker has dried completely before you touch that part of the kit again.

When I was putting the small vents in the chest, I was worried they would not stay in, but I was wrong. As a precaution I used a small drop of glue in the back so those parts would not fall out.

After I finished working on the body I turned my attention to the head. I encountered no difficulty in construction.

Now, with all the major parts assembled, I put the kit together, and it's finished. If I wanted to I could go back and paint or detail the kit, but I won't cover that until a later issue.

Over all, the Tekkaman Blade kit is perfect for beginners. It is well designed, and easy to assemble. When you are finished, there are few visible seam lines. Most of the kit is already molded in its proper color so you don't have to worry too much about painting.




There was some trouble making the volltekka close completely so that a large seam line was not prominent.

Head assembly was difficult because the antenna did not really stay when attached to the head. To fix this, I used a tiny drop of glue to hold then in place.

The only major problem I had was with the colored stickers. You should try to stay away from the stickers because sometimes the colors do not really match the plastic. You should only use them if absolutely necessary.

Look for the mad modeler in the next issue when I will take a look at one of the kits from Mobile Suit Gundam 0083: Stardust Memory.



Remember don't rush building your kit. If you do rush, the final results will not be to your liking. This is supposed to be fun and relaxing. 



THE BLAZING HEADS

THE FAN'S FORUM



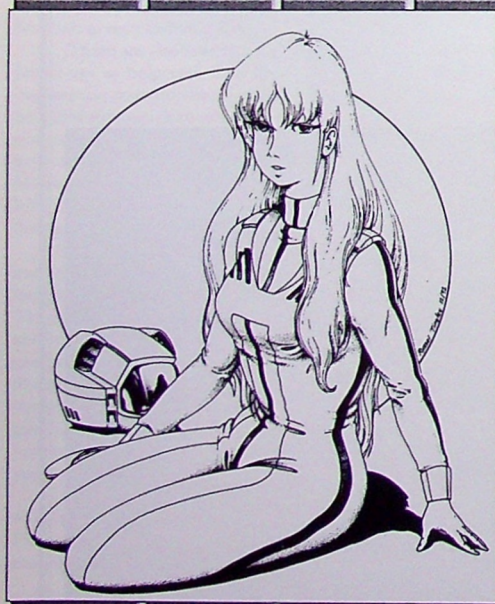
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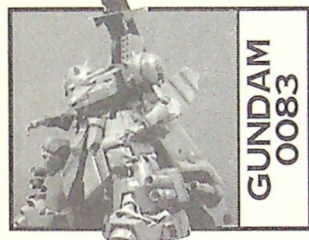
New Type

H o b b i e s a n d T o y s

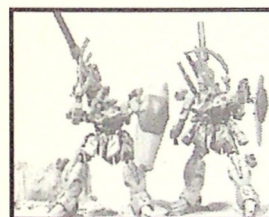
MODELS, GARAGE KITS AND OTHER JAPANIMATION



OTAKU NO VIDEO



GUNDAM
0083



MACHINE
ROCK G



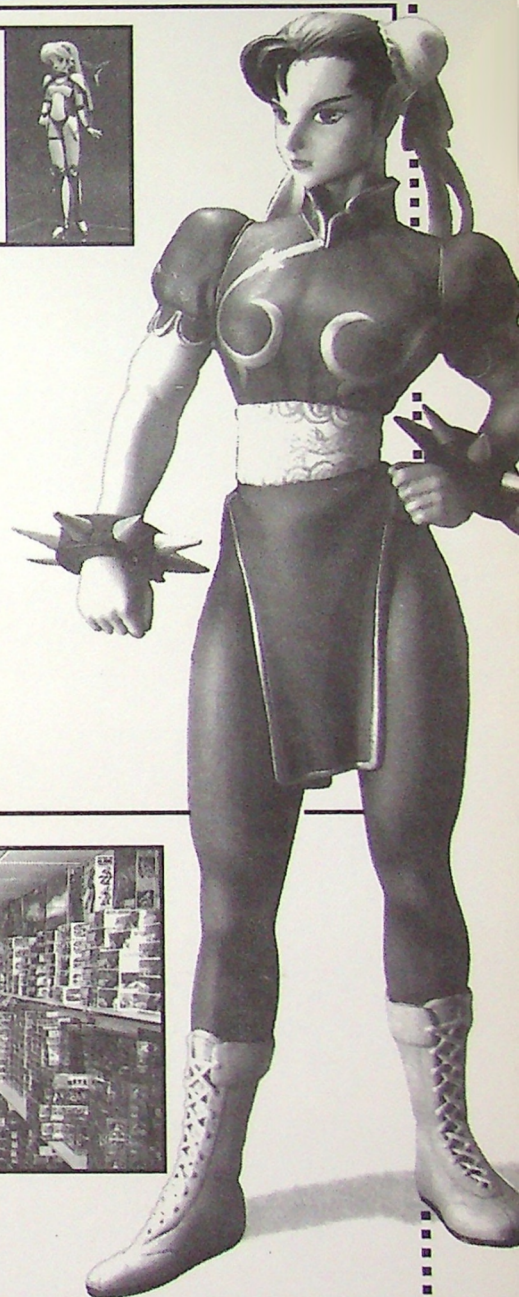
FIVE STAR STORIES



GALAXY
FRAULEIN



GIANT ROBO



NEW TYPE

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DARK IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT



DIE-03

DEVILMAN VOL.1: GENESIS

DEVILMAN: VOL.1 GENESIS

RYO ASUKA HAS LOST HIS FATHER IN A SHOCKING SUICIDE. RYO CONFIDES IN AKIRA, HIS BEST FRIEND, THE TERRIBLE SECRET OF HIS FATHER'S DEATH. HIS FATHER HAD DISCOVERED THE EXISTENCE OF A DEMON WORLD AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF A PENDING INVASION. HE WHO DARES TO KILL A DEMON MUST BECOME ONE HIMSELF. BUT ONLY ONE OF A PURE HEART...ONE LIKE AKIRA!

A CHILLING PSYCHODRAMA FROM MASTER CREATOR GO NAGAI (MAZINGER)

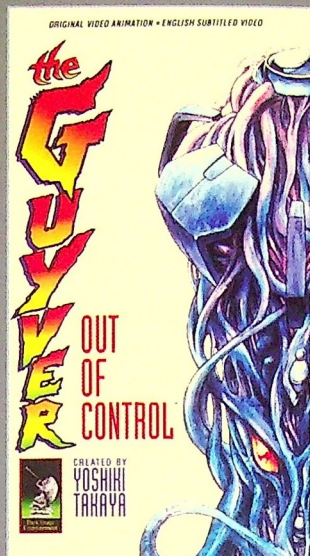
Released By



**Dark Image
Entertainment**

Presented By

L.A. HERO



DIE-04

GUYVER: Out of Control

Sho Fukamachi, a young school boy, discovers a mysterious metal object. In a blinding flash Sho accidentally fuses with the GUYVER, an alien bio-armor of unlimited power. To save his friends and family, Sho must battle the evil Chronos corporation and their biomorphic creatures, the Zoanoids.

Guyver-Out of Control is based on the original manga created by Yoshiaki Takaya and this SUBTITLED release is DIFFERENT from the current dubbed release Bio-Booster Armor, Guyver.

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